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The mass media studies section of the proceedings includes the following 13 papers: "Say What?: Broadcasters' Use of Political Broadcast Regulation" (Elizabeth Krueger and Kimberly Corrigan); "Comparing Broadcaster Self-Reports to the Perceptions Viewers Have of Television Advertising: An Exploratory Study in One State" (Jan LeBlanc Wicks); "Assessing Multichannel Media Industry Competitiveness and Performance--Toward an Intra-Industry Strategic Competition Model" (Sylvia M. Chan-Olmsted); "Comparison of Sources of Information for Black State Legislators" (Daniel Riffe); "How Television Audiences Cumulate: An Examination of Reach and Frequency Using People Meters" (David Kamerer); "Research from Beginning to End: Linking Local Television News Practices to the Audience via Information Processing Theory: A Three Station Case Study" (Robert J. Synder); "The Relationship between Involvement and Medium in News Information Processing" (Robert H. Wicks); "Graphic Forms in Network Television News" (Joe S. Foote and Ann C. Saunders); "VCR Attitudes and Behaviors by Length of VCR Presence" (Bruce C. Klopfenstein and others); "The Video News Release: An Analysis of the Development of an Information Subsidy" (Michael Murrie); "Issue and Image Distinctions and Their Relationships to Structure and Content of Political Advertisements for 1988 Presidential Candidates Bush and Dukakis" (Anne Barton White); "Local Government Surveillance and Evaluations of Local Elected Officials: A Comparison of Newspaper, Television, and Mixed-Media Users" (Arthur G. Emig); and "Analysis of Visual Reference Associations in Television News Coverage of the 1988 U.S. Presidential Election Campaign" (Jeffrey Alan John). (MG)

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Say What?:
Broadcasters' Use of Political Broadcast Regulation

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CS 507 255

Broadcasters' Use of Political Broadcast Regulation

Recent proposals for political campaign reform have included calls for spending limits, eliminating negative advertising, and giving blocks of free radio and television time to national and state political parties (Swift says, 1990). Escalation of campaign costs is a major impetus behind these reform suggestions. Yet within these discussions, politicians have been the major focus, rather than the broadcaster and the regulatory mandate for political broadcasting. Current regulations concerning political broadcasting have remained somewhat immune to deregulatory moves by the FCC.

Reagan administration "deregulatory fever" in the 1980s spread from banking, trucking and airlines to telecommunications. The broadcast industry received a boost when the Reagan-appointed FCC, under Chairman Mark Fowler, significantly reduced FCC oversight of the internal affairs of broadcast stations by deregulating commercial radio and television (American Enterprise Institute, 1985). The industry again received a boost from a 1987 FCC decision to eliminate one of the more controversial documents of broadcast regulation, the fairness doctrine, on the grounds that it was unconstitutional. [The fairness doctrine required broadcasters to (1) devote a reasonable amount of time to coverage of controversial issues of public concern, and (2) provide a reasonable opportunity for the presentation of contrasting views on those issues (Cooper & Emerits, 1985).] The FCC decision did not, however, change existing regulations regarding political content.

Fairness doctrine requirements concerning the coverage of election issues were not eliminated when the doctrine was deemed unconstitutional; the action did not apply to the "personal attack" and "political editorial" rules or the "Zapple" doctrine (National Association of Broadcasters, 1988). In addition to the rules concerning election issues embodied in the fairness

doctrine there is another major category of rules in the area of political programming derived from the amended version of the Communications Act of 1934. They are those policies affecting political campaigns, which include: political advertising rules, regulations requiring that political candidates receive equal air time, laws mandating reasonable access for federal candidates, and regulations requiring every licensee to maintain a political file (Whitley & Skall, 1988).

Tunstall (1986) notes that having "fewer" rules is not the same as having "no" rules at all; the significance of the rules that remain is all the greater because the surviving rules seem more ambiguous and vulnerable to alteration or abolition (p. 6). So it would seem for those remaining regulations concerning political issues. The purpose of this study is to document how political broadcast regulation is, or is not, understood and utilized by industry professionals. The central research question guiding this research is: to what extent do broadcasters in a northwestern state understand and utilize Federal Communication Commission regulations for broadcasting?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Two major theoretical models emerge when tracing the background of broadcast regulation--the trusteeship model and the economic/marketplace model. As the industry reacts to its deregulation, a shift from the former to the latter is evident. The consequences of this shift are of concern here with respect to political broadcast regulations, regulations which have survived the industry's deregulation.

The historical and theoretical foundation of regulation, as evidenced in the trusteeship model and as documented in mass communications literature, lies in social responsibility theory (Le Duc, 1987; Krueger, 1988).

Social responsibility theory emerged in the early twentieth century due to a shift away from pure libertarianism. Social responsibility theory has one major premise: that freedom carries concomitant obligations; and the press, which enjoys a privileged position under our government, is obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communications in contemporary society (Siebert, 1956).

This theory accepts the role of the press in servicing the political system, in enlightening the public, and in safeguarding the liberties of the individual, "but it represents the opinion that the press has been deficient in performing these tasks" (Peterson, 1956). In other words, oversight is necessary. The theory accepts the role of the press in servicing the economic system, but it would not have this task take precedence over other such functions as promoting the democratic process or enlightening the public (Peterson, 1956).

Recently, however, the economic/marketplace model has gained considerable ground (Fowler and Brenner, 1982). The economic/marketplace model has become the new approach to broadcast regulation as shown in the FCC 1981 Report and Order [49 RR2d 37-54] whereby the FCC detailed its support for deregulation. It stated:

"The economic model suggests that, given the status of radio broadcasting today, the marketplace and competitive forces are more likely to obtain these public interest objectives than are regulatory guidelines and procedures..." [49 RR2d 37]

Similar deregulatory action was taken for television in 1984.

More recently, the effects of the disintegration of the trusteeship model can be seen clearly in the FCC's ruling to eliminate the fairness doctrine. In August of 1987, the FCC found that the doctrine was unconstitutional and violated broadcasters' First Amendment rights of free speech. The FCC decision to eliminate the fairness doctrine was upheld on

appeal by the District of Columbia Court of Appeals in February of 1989, and refused hearing by the U.S. Supreme Court in January, 1990 (Radio Week, 1990), thereby reinforcing the industry's deregulatory trend (Haloran, 1989).

The prominence of the marketplace model in current broadcast deregulation policy is clear, but one area of broadcast programming remains tentatively under the trusteeship model "umbrella": the area of political content. The future of regulation for political programming, however, is unclear. The question arises, then, how well broadcasters understand and utilize the current political broadcast regulations--regulations which remain, despite deregulatory trends of the 1980s.

The regulations examined in this study fall into two areas--access to the airwaves, and sponsorship. Under access regulations, they include: Sec. 312 (a)(7) (reasonable access for Federal candidates); Sec. 315 (a) (equal opportunity); the Zapple ruling (quasi-equal opportunities); the personal attack rules; and the political editorializing rule. Under sponsorship regulations are included: Sec. 315 (b) (lowest unit rate); and Sec. 317 (sponsorship identification). Brief explanations of the rules are given below, while the full text may be found in the Communications Act itself (48 Stat. 1064, as amended, 47 U.S.C.A. sec. 151 et seq.).

Access Rulings:

Sec. 312 (a)(7): Mandates reasonable access to the airwaves for candidates for Federal office. Broadcasters must make airtime available for sale to Federal candidates.

Sec. 315 (a): If a licensee allows a legally qualified candidate for any public office to use the station (i.e., sells advertising time), the licensee must afford equal opportunity to all other candidates for that office.

Zapple ruling: If a licensee sells advertising time to supporters of a legally qualified candidate, the licensee must afford comparable time to supporters of other candidates for the same office.

Personal attack rules: If during the discussion of a controversial

issue of public importance, an attack is made on the reputation and integrity of a person, that person must be notified within a week of the attack, and given an opportunity to respond to the attack.

Political editorializing rules: If a licensee endorses or opposes a political candidate in an editorial, all other candidates for that office must be notified within 24 hours of the content of the editorial, and must be given an opportunity to reply to the editorial.

Sponsorship Rulings:

Sec. 315 (b): Candidates running for political office must be afforded the station's lowest unit charge for that class and amount of time. Remains in effect 45 days preceding a primary and 60 days preceding a general or special election.

Sec. 317: When a candidate (or supporters) sponsors an announcement or program, it must be clearly stated in the broadcast that the program is "paid for" or "sponsored by" that candidate or supporting group.

Critics of the Communication Act's political regulations (Benjamin, 1987) and of the FCC's Personal Attack and Political Editorializing rules claim that these rules are confusing and inconsistent (Rowan, 1984; Simmons, 1978). Some critics call for the repeal of such regulations (Simmons, 1978). Critics also contend that the rules favor incumbent politicians and disfavor individuals who should have access rights in the political arena (Rowan, 1984). They suggest that Congress has no interest in the promotion of debate and the First Amendment rights of the media, because Congress "is made up exclusively of incumbents, all passionately interested in political survival" (Stern et.al., 1983, p. C5).

The broadcast media have been established as one of the most important disseminators of political information to the public (Jamieson, 1984; Mickelson, 1989), and balanced coverage of campaigns and issues can be seen as a crucial element in having an informed electorate. With the current prominence of the economic model of regulation, it was predicted that broadcasters would correctly utilize the regulations dealing with sponsorship issues (Secs. 315 (b) and 317), as these are congruent with commercial

concerns of the licensee. It was further predicted that broadcasters would utilize the political editorializing rules correctly, as these rules are often the basis on which broadcasters make a decision to not editorialize at their station (Krueger & Fox, 1985), thus they would have increased familiarity with these rules. But with the other access regulations (Secs. 312 (a)(7), 315 (a), Zapple, and personal attack), it was predicted that broadcasters would not utilize these regulations correctly, given the amounts of litigation and confusion which exists concerning them (Simmons, 1978; Stern et. al., 1983; Rowan, 1984).

METHOD

Information for this study was gathered by using both a mail survey and followup phone interviews with respondents selected at random. General managers of all commercial broadcast outlets in a northwestern state were surveyed, general managers chosen because of their position of authority and decision-making at the station. The unit of analysis was the station itself, as represented by the responses of the general manager to the mail survey questions.

The dependent variable in this study is the utilization ability of the respondents, as measured by questions on the survey. Utilization of each political regulation variable was assessed by respondents' answers to three questions posing hypothetical situations about the particular regulation. Ideas for question wording were suggested by the Political Broadcast Catechism (NAB, 1988), an industry publication readily available to broadcasters.

Respondents' correct answers to the three question for each regulation were then totaled, and an index of utilization was created for each regulation, ranging from 0 correct to 3 correct. With this scale, it was

determined that if respondents answered none or only one out of three questions correctly, then they did not correctly utilize the regulation correctly overall. If they answered two out of three, or all three of three, correctly they were seen as correctly utilizing the regulation correctly.

Independent variables investigated include market size and type of station (radio or television) to allow for comparison within the research population. A priori hypotheses were not offered because the literature in this area provides little predictive guidance.

The mail survey consisted of an 8-page questionnaire booklet, and Dillman's Total Design Method was followed (1978). A pretest was conducted using students in a senior-level course in broadcast regulation at a major university. The pretest resulted in minor adjustments to some questionnaire items. The survey of the state's commercial broadcasters was then undertaken. An initial mailing, a postcard reminder, a second mailing to non-respondents, and phone call followups were administered over an 8-week period. To add qualitative richness to the study, telephone interviews were also conducted with 12 randomly selected broadcasters in each size market. Comments from these broadcasters have been kept anonymous, and are included in the results section.

RESULTS

Responses were received from 83 of the 138 commercial outlets in the state, giving a response rate of 60.15%. Given the nature of the survey, seen by some respondents as an investigation of compliance with regulations, the response rate was viewed as acceptable for research purposes. Responses received from broadcasters were representative of their distribution in the state as a whole. Market size categories were fairly evenly distributed

across the sample, as they are across the state. Because of the existence of only one major market in the state, the category "major" was combined with the category "large," so market sizes were delineated by "small," "medium," and "large." Small market stations account for 32.5% of the respondents, medium markets comprise 34.9% of respondents, while large markets equal 32.5% of the sample. Concern about non-respondents was somewhat alleviated by this distribution, as no bias in response by market size was evident.

Commercial stations were grouped into four types: AM radio, FM radio, AM/FM combination radio, and television. Radio stations comprise 86.7% of the survey respondents (AM=30.1%; FM=12%; AM/FM=44.6%), while television stations account for 13.3% of the sample. This is similar, too, to the distribution in the state as a whole--86.2% of commercial broadcasters operate radio stations, 13.8% operate television stations.

Reliability was of concern in this study, as the three items making up each indexed utilization response did not rely on previously available items. Cronbach's alpha, an assessment of the internal consistency of the individual indexes of regulatory utilization, was computed for each set of questions posed concerning the political broadcast regulations. The results of this computation are presented in the following section.

Sponsorship Regulations

It was predicted that broadcasters would correctly utilize the two political regulations dealing with sponsorship issues. Section 315 (b) concerns the lowest unit rate a broadcaster can charge a candidate for political office. The Cronbach's alpha for this index was .72. As can be seen in Table 1, 83.1% of respondents answered two or more of these items correctly, with 49.4% answering two correctly, and 33.7% answering all three correctly. The results provide strong support for the prediction.

TABLE 1

Respondents' Answers to Political Broadcast Regulation Indices
 (Percentages in parentheses)
 N = 83

UTILIZATION

	<u>INCORRECT</u>		<u>CORRECT</u>		Total
REGULATION	0 correct	1 correct	2 correct	3 correct	
<u>Sponsorship</u>					
Sec. 315 (b)	2 (2.4)	12 (14.5)	41 (49.4)	28 (33.7)	83 (100.0)
Sec. 317	5 (6.0)	24 (28.9)	48 (57.8)	6 (7.2)	83 (99.9)
<u>Access</u>					
Polit. Edit.	21 (25.3)	35 (42.2)	19 (22.9)	8 (9.6)	83 (100.0)
Sec. 315 (a)	4 (4.8)	26 (31.3)	40 (48.2)	13 (15.7)	83 (100.0)
Sec. 312(a)(7)	19 (22.9)	36 (43.4)	26 (31.3)	2 (2.4)	83 (100.0)
Pers. Attack	33 (39.8)	30 (36.1)	16 (19.3)	4 (4.8)	83 (100.0)
Zapple Doc.	36 (43.4)	36 (43.4)	10 (12.0)	1 (1.2)	83 (100.0)

Table 1 about here

The other sponsorship regulation under investigation is Sec. 317, which mandates a sponsorship identification in political advertising. The Cronbach's alpha for this index was .79. As can be seen in Table 1, 65% of the respondents answered two or more of the items on this regulation correctly, 57.8% answering two items correctly, and 7.2% answering all three correctly. The results here provide support for the prediction.

The independent variables market size and station type were the analyzed post hoc to see if these variables affected the extent to which broadcasters are able to utilize these regulations. An analysis of variance was computed, and Scheffe difference of means tests were run to see if respondents differed significantly by market size or station type in their abilities to utilize these regulations. No significant differences were detected on either index. It appears that neither market size nor station type help in predicting a broadcaster's ability to utilize the sponsorship regulations.

Interview Comments

Based on comments from telephone interviews, broadcasters seem to deal easily with the sponsorship regulations in political broadcasting. One major market radio general manager made this comment:

The FCC rules as they pertain to the political advertising arena are generally common sense.

While agreeing with that sentiment, a medium market television station manager added this:

It's simple, we just don't accept political advertising within our local newscast, period.

And finally, some frustration is evident in the comments of this small market radio station manager:

It seems that managers just have to guess as to how much they can get from a candidate... In many cases we lose revenues just by trying to be fair.

In summary, broadcasters do correctly utilize the two sponsorship regulations investigated here, Sec. 315 (b) and Sec. 317, as predicted. Broadcasters do not differ significantly in their ability to utilize these two regulations based on the size market in which they broadcast nor the type of station they operate.

Access Regulations

Five regulations concerning candidate access to broadcast stations were assessed in this study, regulations dealing with political editorials, reasonable access for Federal candidates, equal opportunity, quasi-equal opportunity, and personal attack. Each is discussed below.

It was predicted that broadcasters would correctly utilize the political editorializing rule, requiring notice and an opportunity for response whenever an editorial endorsing a candidate is broadcast. Because this is often a reason for not choosing to air editorials, it was reasoned that broadcasters would be familiar with the rule. The Cronbach's alpha for this index was .74.

The prediction was not supported by the data. As can be seen in Table 1, only 32.5% of the respondents correctly utilized this rule, 22.9% answering two items correctly and 9.6% answering all three correctly. It appears that broadcasters do not utilize this regulation correctly. No significant differences were detected in respondents' answers by market size of station type.

For the four other political access regulations, it was predicted

that broadcasters would not utilize them correctly, based on the regulatory and litigatory history of these regulations.

Section 315 (a) sets out the broadcaster's obligation to provide equal opportunity to candidates for the same office. As noted, it was predicted that broadcasters would not utilize this regulation correctly. The Cronbach's alpha for this index was .71. As can be seen in Table 1, 63.9% of respondents answered two or more of the items on this index correctly, thus not supporting the prediction. Almost half of all respondents (48.2%) answered two items correctly, while 15.7% answered all three correctly, showing strong evidence that broadcasters do correctly utilize the equal opportunity requirements in contrast to the prediction. No significant differences were detected in respondents' answers based on market size or station type.

Sec. 312 (a) (7) was also investigated in this study, concerning the affirmative access obligations a broadcaster is under when dealing with candidates for Federal offices. It was predicted that broadcasters would not utilize this regulation correctly. The Cronbach's alpha for this index equalled .70. As can be seen in Table 1, approximately two-thirds of respondents (66.3%) did indeed answer two (43.4%) or three (22.9%) of the items on this index incorrectly, supporting the prediction. It appears that broadcasters do not utilize this regulation correctly, indicating confusion in this area. No significant differences were detected in respondents' answers based on market size or type of station.

The personal attack ruling was also explored in this study. This ruling requires broadcasters to notify a person whose reputation was attacked during the discussion of an issue of public importance, and to give the person an opportunity to respond on the air. The Cronbach's alpha for this index equalled .67. Here, as above, the prediction was supported. Fully three-

quarters (75.9%) of the respondents answered two (36.1%) or all three (39.8%) of the index items incorrectly, indicating confusion over this rule. And, again, no significant differences were detected among respondents' answers based on market size or on type of station operated.

And finally, utilization of the Zapple doctrine was investigated in this study. These quasi-equal opportunity obligations require a broadcaster to sell advertising time to supporters of a candidate for public office if time has already been sold to another group of supporters of a candidate for the same office. The Cronbach's alpha for this index was .73. It was predicted that broadcasters would incorrectly utilize this political broadcast ruling. As can be seen in Table 1, the prediction was well supported. The vast majority of respondents (86.8%) missed two or more of items in the index, while only 13.2% correctly utilized this regulation. Broadcasters do not seem to be utilizing the Zapple doctrine correctly, based on their responses to this index.

In summary, it appears that respondents overall do not correctly utilize political broadcast regulations dealing with access issues, with the notable exception of Sec. 315 (a), the equal opportunity obligation. Post hoc analyses of the predictive value of independent variables market size and type of station indicated no significant differences in respondents' answers for any of the access regulations.

Interview Comments

Based on comments from telephone interviews, it seems that few broadcasters air editorials of any kind, much less editorials endorsing political candidates. Said one, typical of comments received from those interviewed:

Broadcasters shouldn't use their franchise improperly. Report

the facts, that's our responsibility. All the facts we can, and not the twisted facts.

And this:

Editorializing isn't fair. It is not fair to other stations or candidates.

On equal opportunity, broadcasters claimed that these issues are the most frequently faced by station managers. Perhaps it is due to their abundant experience with equal opportunity that most managers do indeed understand and apply these concepts correctly. One station manager interviewed, however, claimed to be confused and angrily commented:

The fair time rules are not all followed by all stations... the FCC could inspect files from several stations in any given market and will find discrepancies, and when a station tries to abide by the rules, in many cases it will lose money just to play it safe.

With respect to the reasonable access obligations to Federal candidates, interviews indicated that most station managers confused this obligation (Sec. 312 (a)(7)) with the equal opportunity requirements of Sec. 315. Said a medium market radio station manager:

If the opponent is on the air, they must allow the other air time too. It's simple, either let them all on or let no one on.

And this from a small market radio station manager:

Just to get by, you have to dig through all this stuff... I don't know, I've never known, I just try and call someone about it.

Concerning the personal attack rules, which the survey indicated broadcasters do not correctly utilize, all of those interviewed claimed not to partake in personal attacks and most of them condemned the practice. Little understanding was evident of the notion that it is not necessarily the station itself which institutes the attack, but that an attack can occur during talk show or disc jockey banter. Comments like the following ones were typical:

I do not believe that mud slinging is appropriate, in any campaign. The public gets tired of hearing the mud. (Small

market radio GM)

Personal attacks are uncalled for--there must be a far more correct way to report on a campaign. (Small market radio GM)

The Zapple doctrine, the quasi-equal opportunity obligations, generated the most surprise. All but one of those station managers interviewed indicated they were not familiar with it. The one who could comment directly on Zapple, a medium market radio station manager, had this to say:

We afford all candidates or their authorized spokesmen an opportunity to air free, two-minute statements as public affairs through our news department.

When asked about political broadcast regulations as a whole, the majority of those interviewed made comments similar to this medium market radio station manager:

Political rules are hard and confusing--they are grossly unfair. Or this small market radio station manager:

Maybe I'm naive and on shaky ground. I just doing my best. Or finally this comment, also from a small market radio station manager:

I don't know a single broadcaster that fully understands political rules. Most of us fly by the seat of our pants on these issues. We wish that someone would put out a clear text English version that conversationally address these issues.

As evident by these comments, broadcasters do find the political broadcast rules confusing. These comments mimic, and indeed verify, the results of the survey.

CONCLUSIONS

The study described herein was undertaken to assess the ability of a northwestern state's broadcasters to correctly utilize political broadcast regulations, those concerned with sponsorship issues (Sec. 315 (b) and Sec. 317 of the Communications Act) and with access issues (Sec. 312 (a) (7), Sec.

315 (a), political editorializing, personal attack, and Zapple doctrine).

Despite the deregulatory fervor at the FCC in the 1980s, these regulations were left intact, and represent the broadcaster's responsibility to the public in the political arena.

In general, broadcasters correctly utilize regulations addressing sponsorship issues. These seem to pose little problem to the broadcaster when faced with hypothetical situations which would trigger these regulations. Broadcasters seem know when and to whom the lowest unit rate provision applies, no surprise considering the effect on the station's profitability political advertising generates. Since many, and perhaps most, general managers come to that position through the ranks of the sales department, and since it is the sales department which pens the contract with the candidate, their familiarity with this regulation is expected. The other sponsorship regulation, requiring a clear statement of just who sponsors the advertising, poses no problem for the broadcaster either, perhaps because the advertising agency producing the broadcast spot inserts the statement as a matter of course, relieving the broadcaster of the responsibility.

The access regulations do however pose problems for broadcasters, with the notable exception of the equal opportunity provision (Sec. 315 (a)). It seems, from comments generated in interviews, that broadcasters deal with this issue so often during a political campaign that this familiarity breeds correct utilization of the regulation. As with sponsorship rules, little confusion is evident when dealing with this rule.

But the other access regulations (Sec. 312 (a)(7), political editorializing, personal attack and Zapple) do seem to give broadcasters problems when applying them to hypothetical situations. From the interview comments, it is evident that broadcasters do confuse the issue of affirmative access for Federal candidates with the equal opportunity provision. This

confusion suggests that educating broadcasters on the fine points of distinction between these two regulations may help the situation. Broadcasters do seem to grasp equal opportunity, and given clear guidance might also apply the affirmative access provision effectively.

Their lack of familiarity with the Zapple doctrine however was disturbing, given the reasoning that if equal opportunity situations arise so frequently it is perhaps the case that Zapple situations occur as well and are not resolved as fairly. As above, education may be the key here as well as investigating further the possibility that broadcasters simply lump Zapple situations (quasi-equal opportunity) with Sec. 315(a) situations and consider them all as equal opportunity. In short, perhaps while in a legal sense the two are different, in a practical sense these two rulings are the same in the broadcaster's mind. This issue deserves further research, for if this is the case, their utilization of Zapple should have been reflected in more correct responses.

Based on comments from the interviews, it seems that the remaining access rulings on which broadcasters are confused (political editorializing, personal attack, Zapple) are perhaps so rare an issue for them that they simply lack familiarity with these rules. Few broadcasters nationally still editorialize, and so correct utilization of a regulation dealing with editorials may simply be unrealistic. The same may be true of the personal attack rule--that an episode triggering its obligations is so unusual on the local level that familiarity with this ruling seems questionable. Attacks often occur not during news or public affairs programming, but during nationally syndicated talk shows, and the syndicator or network perhaps addresses the personal attack ruling, not the local broadcaster. While not investigated directly in this study, it is a reasonable explanation for the

lack of familiarity that should be explored in future research.

The above discussion should not be used as an excuse for broadcasters' ignorance of most access regulations. Given the deregulatory tide of the past decade, the significance of the regulations which remain--including the political broadcast regulations--is all the more crucial to the fair and efficient operation of political campaigns on the broadcast media. The FCC still retains the obligation to see that these regulations operate as intended, as an overseer of the public interest, yet this study indicates confusion among broadcasters over most access regulations. Broadcasters themselves admit to this confusion and frustration, and look to the FCC for relief; not necessarily in the form of fewer political regulations, but rather clearer political regulations. Further study into patterns of both amount of usage relative to correct utilization of regulations as well as effective education programs for broadcast professionals seem appropriate.

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COMPARING BROADCASTER SELF-REPORTS TO THE PERCEPTIONS VIEWERS HAVE OF
TELEVISION ADVERTISING: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY IN ONE STATE

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Introduction

A national survey conducted in 1988 suggested that broadcasters had not changed television advertising practices meaningfully since deregulation. However, some broadcasters did not answer questions about how much commercial time and how many consecutive non-program announcements they air in commercial breaks. This suggests that other broadcasters may have provided "socially desirable" answers to these and other survey questions. Since the 1988 findings were based on self-reports, a follow-up exploratory study was conducted to see if Indiana residents had perceptions of advertising that were consistent with what Hoosier broadcasters had reported. Comparing Hoosier perceptions with broadcaster self-reports might suggest whether self-reports from future surveys of broadcasters should be independently confirmed.

This follow-up study of the perceptions Indiana residents had about television advertising was part of the Indiana Poll, a statewide random telephone survey of adult Indiana residents conducted by the Indiana University Center for Survey Research in Bloomington. Residents' perceptions were compared to the practices of stations responding to the 1988 study -- those broadcasting in or into Indiana. Markets with stations that broadcast in or into Indiana are: Chicago, Illinois; Cincinnati, Ohio; Dayton, Ohio; Evansville, Indiana; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Indianapolis, Indiana; Lafayette, Indiana; Louisville, Kentucky; South Bend-Elkhart, Indiana; and Terre Haute, Indiana (Television and Cable Factbook 1988, A-386). A total of 53 commercial TV stations broadcast in or into Indiana, but six of them were used for pretesting the 1988 study. So, residents' perceptions were compared with 53.3% of the stations broadcasting in or into Indiana (26/47-55.3).

Background on the 1988 Study

The goal of the 1988 national survey was to discern whether television advertising practices changed meaningfully since deregulation, as events occurring in the 1980's increased the discretion television managers had in scheduling and accepting ads. The deregulation of commercial television in the mid-1980's gave local broadcasters more control over the amount and content of advertising they carry. The Federal Communications Commission eliminated the 16-minute commercial time guideline in 1984, allowing managers to decide how much commercial time to air per hour. It also rescinded the ban on program-length commercials in which the message is interwoven so closely with program content that the entire program must be considered commercial (Program-Length Commercials 1973). Licensee discretion was also enhanced by the demise of the National Association of Broadcasters Television Code (U.S. v. N.A.B. 1982), which eliminated the 16-minute non-program time (concerning the amount of ads, promotional announcements and public service announcements which could be aired per hour) and clutter guidelines regarding the number of breaks per hour and the number of consecutive announcements airing in them. Managers may now decide how much commercial time to schedule with confidence, as the FCC also eliminated license challenges based on commercialization levels (Revision of Programming 1984).

The FCC relaxed deceptive advertising requirements in 1985. As a result, broadcasters may decide for themselves how to determine whether an advertisement is deceptive. Before 1985, stations were required to have at least one staffer responsible for reviewing ad copy and other clearance duties such as keeping abreast of Federal Trade Commission policy on what constitutes a false or deceptive advertisement and calling for substantiation or proof

when doubts existed about a claim made in an ad (Elimination 1985). Since the NAB Code also included standards regarding the acceptability of advertising (e.g., banning hard liquor advertisements) and guidelines regarding the proper presentation of claims in ads, local stations have gained more responsibility for clearing ads (Maddox and Zanot 1984). In addition, station management may now decide how to assess community response to changes in advertising practices. The FCC is no longer concerned with the methodology a station uses to ascertain community needs; it only considers how responsive a station is to local views about programming and advertising (Revision of Programming 1984). So, with the NAB TV Code's demise and deregulation, local broadcasters have more discretion in scheduling and clearing ads.

The 1988 study (which had a 62.6 percent response rate, represented about 47 percent of all television stations in the United States and was generally representative of network affiliation and broadcast band) sought to examine how broadcasters were adapting to this increased discretion. Stations broadcasting in or into Indiana aired 13:07 per hour of commercial time in early fringe (3:00 to 7:00 p.m. or 4:00 to 8:00 p.m., depending on the time zone), more than the 12:15 reported by broadcasters in the national sample. Indiana broadcasters also reported airing more non-program time during early fringe, airing 14:40 per hour, as opposed to the 14:25 average reported by broadcasters nationwide. Indiana broadcasters did not vary from broadcasters nationwide in the number of program-length commercials they air per month--both averaged five. Both groups also averaged seven commercial breaks with four consecutive announcements in them per hour of early fringe.

Indiana broadcasters mirrored broadcasters nationwide in their policies pertaining to clearing deceptive advertising. Both averaged having about 12

standards (e.g., time and interruption standards and product and copy acceptance). Both also consulted about five policy sources when making decisions about advertising (including FCC and FTC Publications and the former NAB TV Code). Indiana broadcasters also appeared to be similar in their attempt to remain responsive to public concerns: both averaged complaint policies for dealing with two groups (either viewers, advertisers, interest groups and/or minority groups).

Social Desirability

Broadcasters as a whole reported in the 1988 study that they were still adhering to the policies which existed before deregulation. However, there is the potential for social desirability, or the tendency to provide answers that make a respondent "look good." In other words, broadcasters may be unwilling to admit to behavior previously deemed "undesirable" by the FCC for fear of inviting reregulation, so results may provide an inaccurate estimate of commercialization, for example. A mail survey was therefore chosen for the 1988 study, as questions about these advertising practices might be considered sensitive, and the anonymity that mail responses provide encourages candid responses (Babbie 1989).

However, it also seemed advisable to try to discern if broadcasters were indeed providing "socially desirable" responses. Moser and Kalton (1972) note that the simplest approach to detecting response errors is to check the accuracy of survey responses against data from other sources.

Results were therefore reviewed for evidence of this problem. Nationally, only 4.2 percent of respondents reported exceeding the old FCC 16-minute commercial time guideline (18 of 426 responding). More reported exceeding the old NAB TV Code non-program time guideline of 16 minutes (17.7

percent or 73 of 411 responding). Most stations accept program-length commercials, even though they were banned before deregulation, with 77.9 percent (or 366 of 470 responding) accepting them while 22.1 percent (or 104) did not. However, 4.2 percent of stations (19 of 453 responding to this particular question) air 20 or more program-length commercials per month and two stations aired more than 100. Apparently, some broadcasters will report "undesirable" behavior.

Approximately 50 broadcasters left the response to the amount of commercial time blank and/or did not distinguish commercial time from non-program time. Although broadcasters did not violate old NAB TV Code standards regarding clutter, as they averaged seven breaks per hour and four spots per break, about 50 left the response to the number of consecutive non-program announcements blank. Four pretests and over 400 responses suggest these questions were not difficult to understand or complete, especially since managers were asked to calculate averages in a daypart when they schedule commercials.

There are several possible explanations. Rotfeld et al. (1990) reported that non-response in their clearance survey was "a function of either the executives' hectic schedules, or....corporate policy to not respond to any surveys" (p. 6). However, Rotfeld et al. (1990) also suggest that response bias might be limited to items dealing with practices the FCC formerly considered important and/or noted indicated service in the public interest. Thus, the two questions from the 1988 study, both dealing with former aspects of FCC concern, may similarly represent bias limited to specific items. Perhaps some managers would rather not respond than respond untruthfully to

questions regarding practices of former FCC concern. And others may opt to provide socially desirable answers.

Review of the Literature

Evidence suggests that Indiana residents could discern if the number of commercials on television increased. Viewers learn when to expect breaks and thus avoid watching commercials (Ray and Webb 1976). They also notice when the number of spots in a break is increased, believe the extra commercial time is taken away from programming and blame advertisers for it. As a result, they become more negative toward ads (Mord and Gilson 1985).

Evidence also suggests that broadcasters may be hesitant to add too many commercials. Although evidence is mixed, it appears that most television stations did not exceed FCC commercialization guidelines before deregulation (Johnson 1973; Krasnow et al. 1983; Revision of Programming 1984) because prior to that time the FCC maintained that commercialization was an important element in judging a licensee's overall program performance (Amendment 1964). Commercialization was defined as the amount of time devoted to advertising, the length of individual commercials and the number of spots in a break. The FCC set commercial time guidelines at 12 minutes in 1961 (Revision of Programming 1983), and 16 minutes in 1973 (Delegation of Authority 1973).

The FCC reviewed commercialization in the overall evaluation of station performance on a case-by-case basis (Commercial Advertising 1964). It considered the elimination of advertising excesses a factor in determining whether a licensee's program service was in the public interest when issuing and renewing licenses (Public Service Responsibility 1946). In the early 1970's the FCC noted that some broadcasters were subordinating the public interest to "salability" by airing program-length commercials selling products

and services like chinchilla ranching (Weigel 1973) and real estate (Columbus 1970). Fines and admonitions were leveled to deter the practice and program-length commercials were finally banned in 1973 (Program-Length Commercials 1973; Notification 1974).

Given broadcasters' performance before deregulation, it appears that Indiana viewers may not think that there are more commercials on television now than there were five years ago. Results of the 1988 study suggest that commercialization practices have not really changed. However, since this average represents only one time period, early fringe, commercialization might be higher overall, when all time periods are considered.

However, most TV stations broadcasting in or into Indiana report having commercial time and interruption standards. Of these 26 stations, 19 report having a time standard while seven do not and 18 report having an interruption standard while eight do not (Wicks 1989). Given that the majority appear to be attempting to limit the number of commercials they air, the evidence suggests that Indiana residents will not think that there are more commercials now than five years ago. The evidence also suggests, however, that if an increase in commercials has occurred, residents will be able to tell.

Indiana managers also appear to be experimenting responsibly with program-length commercials. Again, the average Hoosier station airs five program-length commercials per month. That translates into anywhere from two-and-a-half to five hours per month, or roughly an extra hour of commercials per week, or an extra eight or nine minutes per day, or 45-seconds per hour -- in a 20 hour broadcast day (Wicks 1989). It therefore appears that Hoosier managers are trying to avoid overcommercializing their stations. Despite this, Indiana viewers should perceive that there are more program-length

commercials on television now, because they were previously banned. Answers to this particular question also serve as a check on the accuracy of viewer perceptions.

Results of the 1988 survey also suggest Indiana broadcasters are still attempting to prevent deceptive ads from airing. The average Hoosier station has 12 standards (e.g., limiting commercial time or banning contraceptive ads), consults outside sources when making advertising policy decisions (e.g., the Better Business Bureau) and spends about five hours per week prescreening advertisements. Indeed, of the 26 stations broadcasting in or into Indiana, 21 report having a copy acceptance standard and five do not. However, only eight have a substantiation standard while 18 do not (Wicks 1989).

Perhaps these policies were retained because of the FCC's tradition of concern with deceptive advertising. The FCC noted early on that it expected stations to investigate potential advertisers (KMPC 1939). It originally attempted to regulate advertising content (Public Service Responsibility 1946), but later relinquished most of its responsibility in this area to the Federal Trade Commission (Liaison 1987). But the FCC noted that licensees did have obligations regarding deceptive advertising (Elimination 1985):

"Broadcasting licensees must assume responsibility for all material which is broadcast through their facilities. This includes all programs and advertising material which they present to the public. With respect to advertising material, the licensee has the additional responsibility to take all reasonable measures to eliminate any false, misleading, or deceptive matter...This duty is personal to the licensee and may not be delegated." (Report 1960, p. 2313)

These measures included taking reasonable steps to assure every prospective advertiser's "reliability and reputation" and "ability to fulfill promises made to the public over the licensed facilities," (Licensee 1961)

especially those of "questionable character" (KMPC 1939). Broadcasters also had to exercise particular care when deciding to accept advertising which is the subject of an unadjudicated Federal Trade Commission complaint (Elimination 1985). The FCC expected more diligence when a station employee prepared ad copy or directly examined ad claims, and acted when a station neglected to implement adequate clearance practices (NAB 1984; Smith 1970-1).

However, most of these requirements were eliminated in 1985. The FCC simply noted that stations are still responsible for all material which is broadcast on their facilities. How stations choose to fulfill this responsibility is up to them. And stations may consider practices other stations use (Rotfeld et al. 1990; Rotfeld, Abernethy and Parsons 1990; Wicks 1989), as well as practices used in other countries (Miracle and Nevett 1987). Stations may also consider practices used by major advertisers who use agencies and national media (Zanot 1985), trade and media associations (LaBarbera 1983; 1980b), radio stations (Rotfeld and Abernethy 1990) and magazines (Rotfeld and Parsons 1989; LaBarbera 1981). The American Advertising Federation, Better Business Bureaus and/or the NAD/NARB might also provide information and advice (Armstrong and Ozanne 1983; Zanot 1980; LaBarbera 1980a). Old NAB Code standards (Linton 1987; Maddox and Zanot 1984; NAB TV Code 1982), as well as the ABC (Capital Cities 1986), CBS (1984) and NBC (1986) codes may also be used. Since Indiana broadcasters have retained at least some advertising policies and have other sources to consult, one might conclude that residents will not perceive that there are more deceptive ads on television now than there were five years ago.

Ascertainment of community needs was also a principal ingredient of a licensee's public interest obligation before deregulation. The concept of

ascertainment originated in the 1960 En banc Programming Inquiry, where it was first noted that licensees should try to discover local broadcasting "tastes, needs and desires" (Report 1960, p. 2312). In 1961 the FCC rejected a license application where no effort was made to ascertain local needs and which included the program schedule from other commonly-owned stations instead (Suburban 1961). Ascertainment was later expanded to include "commercial content and practices" as well as programming (Amendment 1964).

Two Primers specified ascertainment methodology, including the number of interviews to be made, the type of leaders to contact, what survey methods might be utilized, and how to report survey results (Ascertainment 1976; Primer 1971). Licensees are no longer required to follow these procedures, with the FCC now focusing on how responsive a station is to community needs and views rather than how these decisions are made.

It appears that Hoosier broadcasters are still trying to ascertain community needs. The average station broadcasting in or into Indiana has advertising complaint policies for at least two groups. Eleven of these 26 stations have policies for dealing with viewer complaints. In addition, 13 have policies for dealing with advertiser complaints, 11 have policies for dealing with interest group complaints and 12 have policies for dealing with minority group complaints (Wicks 1989). Given the presence of formal complaint mechanisms for a number of groups, it appears that Hoosiers will perceive that stations are concerned about their opinions.

Research Questions

A number of predictions are therefore suggested by the literature review. Specifically:

1. Indiana residents will not perceive that the amount of commercial time has increased significantly over the past five years.
2. Indiana residents will perceive that the number of program-length commercials has increased significantly over the past five years.
3. Indiana residents will not perceive that the number of deceptive advertisements has increased significantly over the past five years.
4. Indiana residents will not perceive that stations in their area are less concerned with viewer complaints than they were five years ago.

Methods

Four questions pertaining to viewer perceptions of television advertising were included in the 1989 Spring Indiana Poll. Interviewers talked to 776 randomly selected respondents between April 24 and June 4. The telephone sample was selected using a random digit dialing method and the list of telephone exchanges in the state was obtained from AT&T. Within households with multiple adults, respondents were randomly chosen through the "last birthday" method.

Operationalization of the Dependent Variables

The perceptions of residents were operationalized by asking them to compare certain aspects of television advertising now to five years ago to have them consider how television had changed since deregulation without directly informing them of the purpose of the question. Questions were composed in an attempt to discern whether viewers noticed any differences due to the elimination of the commercialization guideline, the ban on program-length commercials, and the relaxation of deceptive advertising and ascertainment requirements. The question about program-length commercials was also included to ensure that viewers could accurately perceive changes.

These questions were intended to examine whether viewers perceived differences in television since deregulation and if their perceptions differed from broadcaster self-reports. Whether the number of commercials on TV increased, whether the number of program-length commercials increased, whether the number of deceptive ads increased and whether the responsiveness of local stations decreased were operationalized using a five-point Likert scale, with values ranging from Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (5) (Babbie 1989). These questions came fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth in the Indiana Poll questionnaire and were read as follows:

"The next few questions are about television today. For each statement, please indicate how much you agree or disagree.

There are more commercials on television now than there were five years ago.

There are more programs on television selling products like real estate than there were five years ago.

There are more dishonest advertisements on television now than there were five years ago.

The television stations in my area are more concerned with viewer complaints about advertising than they were five years ago."

Statistical Techniques Employed

Decision rules for the research questions were established. First, a mean was calculated for each question. For the first three questions, if the mean was in one of the disagree categories, the hypothesis was supported. If the mean was in one of the agree categories, the hypothesis was not supported and the changes that Hoosiers perceived were assumed to be significant ones. For the question on viewer complaints, the opposite technique was used.

Results

The sampling error for the Indiana Poll was plus-or-minus four percent at the 95 percent confidence level. The response rate was 60 percent and 56 percent of the respondents were female. The average length of the interviews was 27 minutes.

Research Question #1

Research Question #1 posited that Indiana residents would not perceive that the amount of commercial time has increased significantly over the past five years. It appears that the opposite is true, as most Hoosiers agree that there are more commercials on television now than there were five years ago (with the mean being 1.8 and the standard deviation .895 -- see Table 1).

Research Question #2

Research Question #2 posited that Indiana residents would perceive that the number of program-length commercials increased significantly over the past five years. Hoosiers generally agree that there are more programs on television selling products like real estate than there were five years ago (with the mean being 2.16 and the standard deviation .995). It also appears that they are able to accurately note changes in television practices.

Research Question #3

Research Question #3 posited that Indiana residents would not perceive that the number of deceptive ads increased significantly over the past five years. Results support the opposite conclusion, as most Hoosiers agree that there are more dishonest ads on television now (the mean being 2.36 and the standard deviation 1.14).

Research Question #4

Research Question #4 posited that Indiana residents would not perceive that stations in their area are less concerned with viewer complaints than they were five years ago. This conclusion is supported since most Hoosiers agree that stations are more concerned with viewer complaints now. The mean was 2.78 and the standard deviation 1.13.

Discussion

A number of limitations must be kept in mind when considering study results. The comparisons between the results of the 1988 study and this study are not direct and must be conservatively made. These two surveys were conducted approximately one year apart and compare part of a national survey of broadcasters with a survey of the residents of one state. And results may be applicable only to Indiana residents. These comparisons are acknowledged to be problematic. In addition, results of the 1988 study dealing with commercialization were based on only one daypart. Finally, although responses to the program-length commercial question suggest that viewers as a whole can accurately perceive changes, one must consider that some viewers may have responded incorrectly or in a biased manner. For example, are people more likely to respond that things were better "in the good old days"?

Results suggest that independent confirmation is needed for studies of broadcaster behavior relying on self-reports. Although Hoosier broadcasters report that they are not exceeding the old NAB and FCC 16-minute guidelines, viewer perceptions indicate this may not be true. Viewers may perceive an increase in commercialization levels that does not exceed the old 16-minute

guidelines. Whatever the explanation, it appears that commercialization and clutter levels may be higher than the results of the 1988 study indicate. Therefore, researchers who examine commercialization and clutter levels in the future should plan to conduct "spot checks" by taping programming off the air, calculating the amount of commercial time and clutter independently, and comparing calculations to responses.

Results also suggest that deregulation may not have been in the best interest of Indiana residents. Viewers apparently noticed an increase in commercial time, program-length commercials and dishonest ads. Is an increase in the number of commercials and deceptive ads truly in the "public interest?" Researchers should also tape and review programming in future studies to attempt to discern whether stations are actually airing deceptive ads. Decisions of the relevant state agencies and the Federal Trade Commission could be examined to determine which ads are or might be considered deceptive.

Despite these concerns, Indiana residents agree that the stations in their area are more concerned with viewer complaints than they were five years ago. Thus, stations may be trying to determine whether increases in commercialization are "too great" by trying to stay abreast of viewer opinions, for example. They may be doing the same for program-length commercials and dishonest ads. Thus, independent confirmation in future studies may also demonstrate whether and how broadcasters adapt commercialization levels and clearance policies to respond to viewer opinions.

Conclusion

Results of this exploratory study have suggested that viewers are noticing the changes broadcasters are making in response to their new freedoms. Results also suggest that researchers should attempt to evaluate the accuracy of self-reports whenever possible, despite the inherent methodological and technical difficulties. Indeed, confirmation from more than one source is desirable. Replication of a more sophisticated version of this study on a national basis could be quite useful to the industry and policymakers, as it might suggest whether viewers nationwide think deregulation was truly in their interest and also reveal how broadcasters are experimenting and whether they are adapting to viewer concerns.

TABLE 1
Responses to Four Perception Questions
(N=776)

VALUE/LABEL	PERCENT	N
<u>More Commercials Now?</u>		
1 Strongly Agree	42.4	329
2 Agree	41.5	322
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	8.4	65
4 Disagree	6.1	47
5 Strongly Disagree	0.9	7
Don't Know	0.5	4
Refused	0.2	2
<u>More Programs Selling Products like Real Estate?</u>		
1 Strongly Agree	24.9	193
2 Agree	46.6	362
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	10.7	83
4 Disagree	13.3	103
5 Strongly Disagree	1.0	8
Don't Know	3.4	26
Refused	0.1	1
<u>More Dishonest Advertisements?</u>		
1 Strongly Agree	25.6	199
2 Agree	37.3	289
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	11.3	88
4 Disagree	23.1	179
5 Strongly Disagree	1.3	10
Don't Know	1.2	9
Refused	0.2	2
<u>Stations More Concerned with Viewer Complaints?</u>		
1 Strongly Agree	9.4	73
2 Agree	37.7	292
3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	11.7	91
4 Disagree	27.5	213
5 Strongly Disagree	4.6	36
Don't Know	9.0	70
Refused	.1	1

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Assessing Multichannel Media Industry
Competitiveness and Performance

---Toward An Intra-Industry Strategic Competition Model

A STUDENT PAPER SUBMITTED TO THE AEJMC
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**Assessing Multichannel Media Industry Competitiveness and Performance
---Toward An Intra-Industry Strategic Competition Model**

In the last twenty years, the rapid, sophisticated, and continuous innovations in communication technologies have significantly changed our media environment and brought forth alternative telecommunication systems that are capable of providing abundant channels to the media consumers. In response to this technology driven proliferation of channels, the available media content offered by various media firms has similarly proliferated to satisfy the heterogeneous content demands of the media consumers. In essence, multichannel media industries (namely, the basic cable industry, backyard satellite dish industry, Satellite Master Antenna industry, and others) have developed a unique media market mechanism characterized by more diverse business practices and very much different from the traditional broadcasting market with its limited channel capacity. The end result is greater rivalry among these media firms.

When conducting economic analyses of such media industries, one should pay extra attention to their heterogeneous nature since this is endemic to the operation of the multichannel media industry. In other words, the traditional emphasis on simply utilizing the concept of "industry" as an unit of analysis (which assumes a homogeneous market nature) may inevitably discount the unique market dynamics of the multichannel media industry. This paper proposes an analytical framework for media economists as well as the industry practitioners to study the "industry" not only by examining the overall market operation but also by carefully dividing and concurrently investigating more "homogeneous subsets of firms" according to the industry's key

strategic dimensions to assess firms' relative competitive positions and strategy patterns in the competition process.

This paper is organized as follows. Section II describes the heterogeneous nature of the multichannel media industry and some general operation patterns of the industry; section III provides a theoretical framework for the proposed model by briefly reviewing the areas of industrial organization economics, strategic groups, and mobility barriers; section IV theorizes a model assessing multichannel industry competition and performance, incorporating the constructs discussed above and the observed industry practice patterns; finally, a summary and discussion are provided.

Multichannel Media Industry Aspects

Before one can start analyzing any industry or inductively formulating any model from observed industry phenomena, it is important to clearly define the domain of the market at focus. A multichannel media industry will be defined as an industry consisting of mass media institutions providing entertainment, educational, and/or informative television content through abundant, broadband communication channels to members of the public for a fee. In practice, this may include cable television industry, backyard satellite dish industry (or Direct Broadcast Satellite industry), satellite master antenna television (SMATV) industry, and multichannel multipoint distribution service (MMDS). As in other mass media industries, the members of the multichannel media industry can be classified into three production stages based on the functions they perform in the industry. These

three stages are production, distribution, and exhibition. Producers are responsible for the creation of multichannel content (programs) and distributors act as a middleman purchasing and packaging the programs into individual channels (network program services) which are eventually offered and delivered to the retail (exhibition) outlet. Exhibitors, in turn pick and choose among these channels and thus provide a package of multiple channels for subscription to the potential media consumers¹ (Compaine, 1982). The "distribution stage" is the focal point in this paper since it is the research attention of concentrated market power throughout the mass media and it is at this stage, the delivery of multiple channels from the content creators to the local exhibition, that the multichannel media industry becomes a revolutionary alternative to the traditional broadcast media. The production and exhibition stages will also be examined as well since all three stages are closely interrelated and thus influence each other substantially.

Because of the capacity of "abundant" communication channels, firms in the multichannel media industry operate under a more complex business system and thus are capable of competing with each other in a more diverse strategic fashion. This author will first demonstrate the unique aspects of this multichannel media industry as compared to the conventional broadcasting system and subsequently generalize these heterogeneous industry practices into certain market patterns. The goal is to establish the ground for an intra-industry strategic competition model.

Industry Heterogeneity--A Premise

Multichannel media services are a direct consequence of the revolutionary developments in our regulatory, technological, programming, and economic environment in the last twenty years. As the industry is emerging with competition among and within technologies and between products supplied under different business operation methods, there are no existing models of competition in the mass media industry that are both sufficiently comprehensive to capture the industry complexity and analytically manageable at the same time. Economic models of program patterns in broadcasting have in the past assumed that all broadcasters used the same technology and that all were operated under the same financing mechanism, namely advertiser-support. The situation does not hold with multichannel media competitors.

The observation of strategic diversity within an industry and the corresponding claim that this has a significant bearing on market behavior is central to the theory of strategic groups--an important theoretical foundation of this paper. Thus the demonstration of the existence of diverse strategic behavior in the industry is a necessary condition to formulate the proposed model. The following general observations on the development and current aspects of the "multichannel media industry" should furnish an overview on the heterogeneous operations of multichannel media firms and the environmental atmosphere and characteristics of the industry.

Heterogeneous Demand. There are three kinds of consumers in the multichannel media industry: the final media consumers (subscribers) who actually consume the programs delivered by the channel

distributors, the exhibitors who make deals with the distributors for the carriage of their channels, and the advertisers who purchase advertising time from the channel distributors.² Compared to the traditional broadcast media with only advertising as the financial source, telephone service with only subscriber/user revenues, or magazine publishing with both advertising and subscription charges as financial bases, the multichannel industry is operating under a more complex market system. In other words, the multichannel media distributors have to consider consumer demand from all three sectors of the market. For instance, they have to appeal to the exhibitors with programming and pricing schemes while coordinating with the exhibitors' channel packaging strategies and cooperating with their channel promotion projects; at the same time, they cannot ignore the programming needs and wants of the multichannel service subscribers as these final consumers' "attention" is sold to the advertisers for purposes of marketing their advertised products/services. Though complicated, the nature of demand of the three consumers are closely related. Exhibitors would only be interested in the channels that would be welcomed by their subscribers, not necessarily a lot of subscribers but at least a certain number of specific taste viewers. And advertisers would only support those distributors who can provide programs to attract audiences quantitatively or qualitatively.³ Nevertheless, the heterogeneous demand nature of the market provides more opportunities for strategic planning in the distributors' efforts to satisfy their consumers' wants and needs.

Heterogeneous Supply. As multiple channels are supplied to consumers, the multichannel media industry is in a marketplace to provide a medium

of "choice." The choices for consumers involve a wide range of diverse programs which was impossible under the traditional broadcasting system. Thus, the best way to demonstrate the heterogeneous nature of product entering in the industry is by comparing the newcomer with the traditional broadcasting industry.

Due to the scarcity of the available spectrum, the technical separation needed for avoiding signal interference, and other political reasons, including the Federal Communications Commission's localism policy, historically, there were only three to four commercial broadcast stations in each local market. Under such number limitation and given the total advertiser-supported commercial media structure, it made perfect economic sense for broadcasters to provide the most common-denominator programs to attract the largest possible mass audience in their efforts to attract advertising dollars.

On the contrary, with the advancement on various transmission technologies which makes the establishment of technical capacities for multiple channels possible and a commercial media structure which is both supported by advertisers and subscribers, the multichannel media industry has the choice to offer its consumers general appeal as well as minority taste programming. As audiences generally value programs more than advertisers value audiences, with subscription fee as an important part of the revenues, the supply of programs should fairly reflect the audiences' desire for certain programming, general or specific. For multichannel distributors, such heterogeneous product nature provides them opportunities in applying different competitive programming strategies, in either "form" or "content."

As an environmental factor, the legal system for multichannel

media industries is still complicated and confusing. For example, in the current cable television industry, the U.S. courts are still struggling to determine whether cable television systems should be classified and regulated as common carriers, broadcasters, or regulation-free as with print, since the characteristics of all three are present.⁴ For the SMATV industry which operates as a private cable television system through leases made with private property owners and is thus assumed to be beyond the public authority's regulatory grasp, there have been disputes over the legality and the appropriate regulation approach over these SMATV systems.⁵ The uncertainty of the legal environment for the multichannel media industry is partially due to its technical complexity and the unconventional, heterogeneous operation methods in supplying its products to the consumers. Such regulatory ambiguity actually nurtures a competition arena which has no specific rules of engagement and thus allows a wide ranging application of business strategies.

Multichannel Media Industry Operation Patterns

The multichannel media industry has certain unique methods of operation that substantially influence the patterns of competition among the firms contesting for market shares. Among these methods are: (a) the monopolistic position held by the majority of the media exhibitors (e.g., local cable television system operators) that may create an economic gatekeeping effect in the market, (b) the way channel services are supplied in a "bundle" fashion that may affect the intensity of rivalry and strategic approaches of the competing firms,

and (c) the multiple revenue streams which may have brought firms different competitive advantages.

Economic Gatekeeping Concept

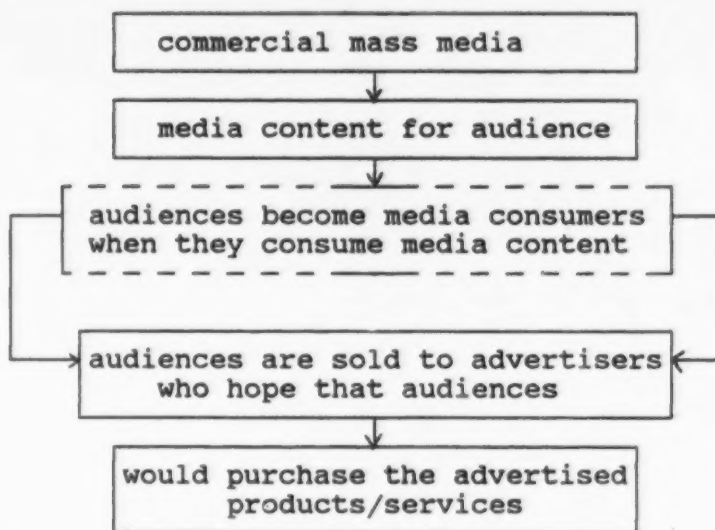
The concept of gatekeeper has been frequently used in studies of the mass communication process, especially with reference to any action within a media organization which involves message selection, shaping, display, timing, withholding, or repetition (Agee, 1982). Although this communication model is predominantly used for studies of news organizations, it possesses a certain uniqueness that can be further explored in an economic context for the study of mass media markets.

Mass communication never occurs without a mass medium, and that medium is more than a mechanical device to send messages. Mass media are social institutions created to perform the tasks that the society requires of them. In essence, they are also complex "industrial organizations" that exist in today's economic system.

As mass media industries have traditionally been described as comprising a production stage which involves the creative development of media content, a distribution stage which involves the transmission of media content (product) from the producer to the mass media outlet, and an exhibition stage which permits the audience to access the mass media message (Compaine, 1982). To reach the "mass" audience or a sufficient number of audience in a target group, media producers and distributors must rely on the "mass" media outlet controlled by media exhibitors. Without the broad range of channel capacity controlled by the media exhibitors, the crucial element of "mass" cannot be created and thus it would be impossible for both media producers and distributors to survive financially.

To further discuss the importance of media exhibitors, the author will review the unique "dual-consumer concept" in the media marketplace (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: THE DUAL-CONSUMER CONCEPT



*adopted from Hiebert's Mass Media V. p. 571.

Hiebert (1988) suggested that media consumers can be placed in two distinct categories: audiences and advertisers (when the media are supported or partly supported by advertisers). The actual media product for advertisers are audiences, not media time or space. Advertisers buy people because people consume the products advertised in the media. In essence, mass media produce content for audiences--first consumers, which in turn, are sold to advertisers--second consumers, who try to persuade these audiences to buy the products and services advertised. Notice that the magnitude of the first consumers is extremely important in affecting the consumption pattern of the second consumers, that is, for a given media content, the more

"massive" the audience is, the more valuable the media product is to advertisers. The degree of potential "mass" audiences is largely determined by the number of media outlets that carry the media content. Hence, media exhibitors are actually the controllers of the dual streams and thus critically influence the dynamic operation of the media economic system.

The essential media delivery function performed by the media exhibitors elevates them into a gatekeeper position in an economic context. They are capable of selecting, eliminating, or adding certain media message distributors according to their strategic plans for attaining certain business goals. In addition, it is possible for them to manipulate or demand certain types of media content to be produced for maximizing their profitability. Such market power need not always rest at the exhibition level; some products of distributors can be so indispensable that they are a "must buy" for exhibitors. Nevertheless, the number of such successful distributors is normally limited and these distributors still require the cooperation from exhibitors at their early stage of establishment.

The market power of a gatekeeping exhibitor in a certain media industry depends on the competitive level in that exhibition stage. Because of the current economic and technology constraints, the number of available outlets for multichannel media exhibitors is very limited in the local market. For example, normally, there is only one cable television system serving each community. Thus, in general, the economic gatekeepers, the multichannel media exhibitors, currently do have a substantial market power in the industry. This kind of power will interact with other competitive forces in the media production and

distribution stages and influence the overall competitiveness and competition pattern in the multichannel media industry.

Bundled Product Supply Method

As multiple television channels are generally offered as a "bundled" product in the multichannel media industry, the potential subscribers for such product are faced with an "all or nothing" choice of a group of programs packaged together. The reasons behind the bundling strategy are economic as well as technological. Economies of scale provided possibly by the multichannel distribution technology, such as coaxial cable, direct broadcast satellites (DBS), and multipoint distribution service (MDS) technology, would drive down the cost per channel as the number of channels increased. Such benefits of efficiency makes a multiple channel bundle a preferable video offering method than a la carte single-channel services. In addition, the cost savings generated from transacting in program bundles relative to selling many programs on an individual basis also contribute to the employment of bundling operation strategy. Under bundling, the degree of competitiveness among the multichannel media distributors is expected to largely depend on the degree of buyer concentration in the downstream exhibition stage (e.g. monopolistic exhibitor or competing exhibitors) and the channel-capacity of the individual exhibitor.⁶

Multiple Financial Resources

From the financial standpoint, multichannel media industries often operate under a combined advertising revenues and subscription fees approach. A mixed financial resources system like this creates a more complicated operation scheme for both distributors and exhibitors since

advertisers' perceived value over certain programs is measured by audience size while the subscribers' perceived program value is evaluated by their actual viewing satisfaction. With advertisers as financial supporters, the actual audience size would be the focus and channels which have the most common-denominator content to attract the largest potential audience would be preferred.

On the other hand, a subscription fees supported service would have much greater incentive to offer minority-taste programs since subscribers can directly reflect their program preference through the marketplace by subscribing or not subscribing. A combination of both financial resources implies a second best solution that both audience size and the offering of "attractive" channels are essential for the success of a multichannel service. However, as the multichannel media industry is maturing, such a combined financial support system has also created a very unique market entry barrier for new multichannel distributors.

To be more specific, in a multichannel market which has already had many established distributors, the start-up process for new distributors becomes very difficult as advertisers' and subscribers' financial support are actually interrelated. In short, since a new distributor has to be carried by enough numbers of exhibitors to build a big enough subscriber base to attract advertisers, it is essential for the distributor to negotiate with the exhibitor-gatekeeper to obtain an acceptable degree of initial clearances for its new service. In order to do so, most of the time, the distributor would have to offer the service for free (or at very little charge) in exchange for the system carriage. However, without the financial support of

advertisers, it is financially infeasible to offer a new service free of charge (or at very little charge) to the exhibitors. With such a vicious spiral constraint, unless the distributor has already had a deep-pocket parent company, it is a common phenomenon for a new multichannel distributor to strategically search for various committed, sophisticated financial partners to overcome the difficulty encountered in the process. For example, some new cable channels, such as the Travel Channel have sold equity positions to cable operators in exchange for carrying the service (Walley, 1987).

Recently, in addition to the subscriber fees and advertising revenues, the multichannel distributors have gradually developed another financial resource for the industry--aftermarket program sales. The original multichannel programming is now often syndicated in the U.S. and foreign markets and has become an important financial resource in subsidizing the programming production cost for multichannel distributors.⁷

Theoretical Framework

The main constructs involved in this paper will now be summarized and analyzed to provide some theoretical background for the proposed model.

Industrial Organization (IO) Theory of Competition

The general methodological approach often used by IO researchers focus on three concepts: 1) industry structure; 2) industry conduct or behavior; 3) industry performance. The three concepts are

traditionally rationalized to interrelate in a causal manner such that industry structure determines the behavior or conduct of firms, whose joint conduct then determines the collective performance of the firms in the marketplace. Such a structural view has become the subject of much criticism as the causal assumption ignores the dynamic of feedback influences that firms' strategic actions may have on the industry structure. This paper subscribes to the so-called modified IO "behavioral approach" which claims that firm conduct is not merely a superfluous intermediate concept and the importance of market structure lies in the way it induces firms to behave, and with the possibility of reverse causalities, conduct links an industry's structure to the quality of its performance (Hatten and Schendel, 1977; Scherer, 1990).

The IO behavioral approach improves the explanatory power of the S-C-P paradigm, provides a rationale for planning firms' strategic conduct, and these notions in turn, establish the basic foundation for the IO research on this paper's main paradigms--strategic groups and mobility barriers. The "structural approach" of IO paradigm is actually a better analytical framework for strategically homogeneous than for strategically heterogeneous industries. With the market characteristic of intra-industry heterogeneity, it is more appropriate to use the behaviorist "strategic" IO approach (recognizing the feedback effects of firm conduct) as the basic theoretical IO propositions for the study of multichannel media industries.

Strategic Groups and Mobility Barriers

The notion of strategic groups is that firms within an industry

can be clustered into different groups according to their strategic conduct. Porter defined a strategic group as a group or a cluster of firms following similar strategies in terms of the key decision variables in the industry (Porter, 1979). Going beyond the simple definition, it is suggested that firms "within" a strategic group resemble one another closely, recognize their mutual dependence, and thus are able to coordinate their behavior more effectively. Furthermore, considering the inter-group market dynamics, it is suggested that the existence of different strategic groups affects the overall level of rivalry in the industry. To be more specific, when firms are associated with different strategic groups, they would have different preferences about pricing, R&D, advertising, optimal output, and other market conduct. As a consequence based on the economic theory, these operational differences complicate the process of cooperation (either explicit or implicit) between groups (Hunt, 1972; Caves and Porter, 1977; Porter, 1979; McGee, 1982). Hence, it is easier and thus more likely for strategic groups that choose similar strategy approaches in the industry key strategic dimensions to cooperate than the groups using very diverse business strategies. According to the same notion, cooperative conduct is easier and more possible to happen within groups than between groups. Also, the environmental changes will not have equal impact on different strategic groups due to their different strategic postures, assets, and skills. Such environmental forces may either perpetuate or alter the cooperation/competition scheme between groups.

Taking a step further in reasoning, Porter proposed that the impact of strategic groups on industry rivalry depends on three factors

that interact with each other and determine the pattern of intergroup rivalry and consequently influence the market performance. These factors are "the number and size distribution of groups," "the strategic distance between groups," "the market interdependence among groups." Porter contends that other things held constant, the more numerous and more equal in size the strategic groups, the more strategic asymmetry enhances rivalry. The second factor, strategic distance, refers to the degree to which strategies in different groups diverge in terms of the key variables; the more the strategic distance among groups, the more difficult tacit coordination becomes and the more vigorous competition is likely to happen. Finally, the market interdependence refers to the degree to which different strategic groups are competing for the same customers or competing for customers in distinctly different market segments, the more the market interdependent, the more severe rivalry will result (Porter, 1979).

Oster (1982) wrote "at the heart of the strategic group theory is the idea that there are rigidities associated with change," and the concept which explains these rigidities is mobility barriers. Mobility barriers are the corollary to the existence of strategic groups. They are the structural and behavioral forces deterring or impeding firms from freely changing their strategic positions. In general, a firm within a group makes strategic decisions which cannot be readily imitated by firms outside the group without substantial costs, significant elapsed time, or uncertainty about the outcome of those decisions (Caves and Porter, 1977). These group-specific entry barriers provide protection to group members from causal strategic imitations by competitors in the adjacent strategic groups. Such

barriers act for a group within an industry rather than for the industry as a whole. Mobility barriers can be expressed in the same form as conventional entry barriers since barriers to group mobility rest on the same theoretical propositions as barriers to a market from outside of the market. Note that it is not claimed that industry-wide entry barriers do not exist, rather, it is emphasized that each group has distinct entry conditions.

Mobility barriers are often created by the past strategic investment choices of firms. However, the height of mobility barriers can be reduced or enhanced through external forces as well as from continuous internal efforts. It is suggested that the major sources of mobility barriers are among those "market related strategies, characteristics of supply in the industry, and features specific to the ownership and management of the individual firm" (McGee, 1986). In general, existing market competitors search for strategic postures they might wish to emulate for improving their current competitive position while potential market entrants look for opportunities from the entire market field as well as those of the target strategic group. Note that mobility barriers not only protect firms in a strategic group from entry by outside firms but also create barriers to current members from easily shifting strategic position to another group (Porter, 1980). In addition, with the notion of mutual interdependence of firms in the same strategic groups proposed previously, it is postulated that firms in the same strategic groups are likely to divert their behaviors from competing to activities that contribute to the building of mobility barriers (Caves and Porter, 1977).

It is asserted that the "height" of the mobility barriers

protecting strategic groups determines their degree of market power. Coupled with other external market factors, such a notion suggests that different strategic groups with different levels of market protection power over profit erosion (from outsiders) will exhibit different levels of profitability. Firms in strategic groups with high mobility barriers will have greater profit potential than those in groups with lower mobility barriers. The strategy-performance relationship is often depicted as follows, (Cool and Schendel, 1987):

$$\text{Firm Performance (namely, profitability)} = f(\text{controlled strategic conduct; non-controllable environment forces})$$

In addition, the difference in group performance is expected to persist since more powerful groups can maintain their profit position by entering into explicit or implicit agreements to maintain and strengthen the disparity in entry conditions (e. g. oligopolistic consensus).

The concept of mobility barriers allows a richer and more realistic portrayal of the competition process between firms utilizing diverse strategies in directing their rivalry. It also offers an opportunity to explain intra-industry performance differences and thus provides a more complete causal link for the structure-conduct-performance IO paradigm.

Mechanism

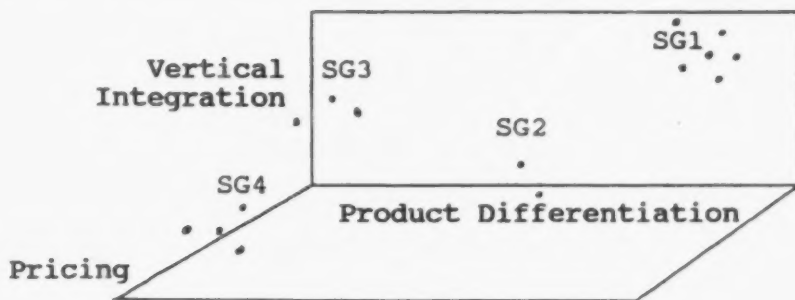
After the discussion on the nature of the multichannel media industry and the overview on the theoretical foundation of this paper,

the author will now propose a linkage between the two in molding an analytical model that is more appropriate for the new, nonbroadcasting, multichannel media industry. First, in seeking to identify the explicit rationales for expected groupings in the industry, the key strategic dimensions for the strategic grouping process will be theorized based on the industry practice pattern and related economic and strategic constructs.

Key Strategic Dimensions for Grouping Process

The identification of relevant strategic dimensions used by firms in the multichannel media industry is a key issue in the studies analyzing the industry operation and state of competition. While these dimensions are essential for making sense of strategic groups in the industry, they also can be used to assess the mobility barriers that partially explain the industry and group performance level. The three key strategic dimensions proposed for grouping process in the multichannel media industry are product differentiation, vertical integration, and pricing strategy (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2: KEY STRATEGIC DIMENSIONS IN THE MULTICHANNEL MEDIA INDUSTRY



Product differentiation. The basic product for the multichannel media industry is the programming service. As the service is offered to the

media consumer in a bundled fashion with the exhibitor acting as a program gatekeeper, the channel distributors are in a market environment that requires them to obtain some degree of monopoly position with differentiated products to enhance their negotiation power, given the extant scarcity of channel spaces. Product differentiation may be based on either the characteristics of the product itself or the conditions surrounding its sale, since multiple channels are packaged into one single service offer, the channel distributors are basically competing only on the program content dimension of the product. If there is sufficient multichannel system capacity for an exhibitor to expand its service (and perhaps entice non-subscribers), it would prefer to add a channel that offers the programming type currently unavailable in its service than to add a channel that provides the programming type already accessible in the current channel package. In general, bundling too many channels with similar programming approaches may create unnecessary competition within the service offered and cause marketing difficulties. Under such a bundled market structure, to survive and even prosper, the channel distributor has to research and develop programming niches to differentiate its channel from others.

Though "product differentiation" as a strategic decision is essential in firms' market efforts to align with the multichannel media environment, the "first comer" advantage obtained by some veteran distributors also demonstrates a useful approach to succeed in this market. Since the slot for every programming type, broad or narrow, is limited due to the gatekeeping process, if a channel distributor is able to be carried by new exhibitors at the early stage of the

exhibitors' services and stays for a certain period of time, it is possible for them to establish a solid audience base by being there first. Some multichannel viewers are observed to possess a certain degree of channel loyalty, especially when the audiences realize they are paying for the programs.⁸

Such first comer advantage would put the "older" channel distributors in a much better competitive position. As the distribution stage becomes more crowded, product differentiation strategy becomes even more important since if a distributor can develop a programming niche to successfully differentiate its channel from the others, it can also become the firstcomer of such a niche slot and occupy this habitat in the marketplace. The niche programming/strategic group formation is actually a continuous process as it is constantly being redefined, extended, and modified by existing members as well as newcomers to the industry.

It is important to note that not only niche, special taste programming but also general appeal programming would survive under the multichannel media market structure. Since the industry is financially supported by both advertisers and subscribers, the need for generating qualitative viewers who may be of interest to certain special products advertisers and quantitative viewers who may be the focus of the advertisers aiming at the consumer group with more common-denominator characteristics is consistent with subscribers' viewing habit as to choose specialized and general appeal programming in combination since the product is packaged for one single price.

Vertical integration. Because the delivery of quality and attractive

multiple channel package is fundamental to the success of a multichannel media exhibitor, there are incentives for the exhibitor to become an "active" player-client of the market to eagerly search for the best programming channel that would increase the value of its offering to the subscribers. By taking this active role seriously, it is logical for the exhibitor to be directly involved in the channel distribution stage.

Since it is the exhibitor at the forefront who has direct contact with the subscribers, who has better understanding on what the audience wants and what may be missing in the current available channel package. A cooperative scheme between the distributor and the exhibitor which allows effective transfer of such market information is attractive to both members. Furthermore, the exhibitor is likely to be valuable in the successful introduction and efficient operation of a new channel service because of its experience and expertise of the industry. Such vertical integration also makes financial sense for both parties because it reduces transaction costs and provide more secure financing methods for the channel distributors.⁹

In spite of all these operational incentives, with only limited slots available in the bundled service, it is also strategically favorable for distributors to establish direct financial relationship with the gatekeeping exhibitor to improve their chances of gaining access. For the exhibitor, the vertical link appears to increase its power over the upstream stage in assuring its interests over certain products are met effectively and efficiently. The strategy of vertical integration is expected to be a favorable and thus important "resource commitment" strategy for the multichannel media industry.

Pricing strategy. The pricing strategy here refers to the per subscriber channel charge to the exhibitor. The pricing decision in the multichannel media industry is very sensitive to the degree of "product differentiation" in the market and the "history" of the product.¹⁰ Since both factors are uniquely associated with the industry, the variation of pricing approaches also deserves scrutiny in studying the strategic dimensions of the industry. It is expected that when products are highly differentiated, that is, when a multiple channel package is bundled with more diverse content-type channels with less channels in each content-type, the channel distributors would be less concerned with price competition and focus more on other non-price competitive strategies, and vice versa. In addition, due to the firstcomer advantage discussed previously, multichannel viewers are expected to establish a certain degree of channel loyalty to the channels they do occasionally view and thus value those channels with longer carriage history in the package more so than the new similar content-type channel. Under such circumstances, veteran channel distributors have greater pricing discretion than potential new ones. As mentioned above, the pricing strategy of a "free" channel carriage is very often offered as an incentive to the gatekeeper-exhibitor.

Group and Industry Competition Patterns

The competition pattern and intensity in an industry is neither a matter of coincidence nor bad luck. Rather, the market structure of an industry has a strong influence in determining the competitive rules of the game, the potential business strategies available to the firms based on their strengths and weaknesses relative to the market environment, and thus, to a large extent, the state and final outcome

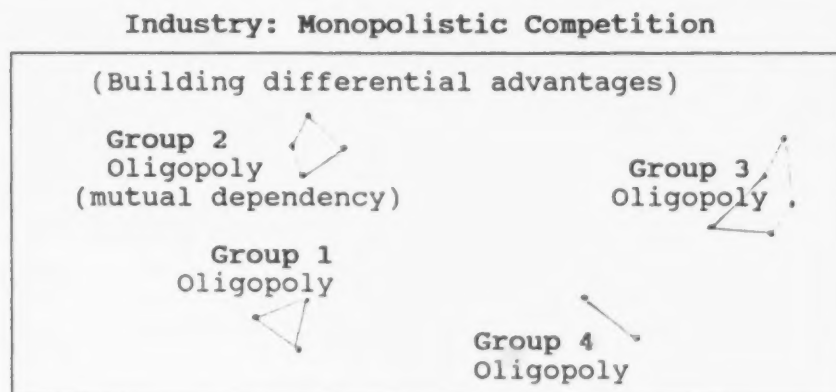
of the competition. Since a multichannel media industry is uniquely characterized by its capability to provide "abundant" television channels to media consumers and is generally comprised of numerous channel distributors with no one having substantial market power to easily manipulate the product (channel) price, the multichannel media distributors are anticipated to be operating under a monopolistically competitive market structure. With the structural framework as a starting point, many competitive conduct archetypes can be drawn based on the industrial economics theory and the notion of strategic groups discussed previously.

Under the market environment, the multichannel media distributors would focus intensively on building differential advantages through competitive market conduct. By creating a somewhat differentiated product, each distributor would possess some monopolistic characteristics (assuming that the initial carriage by the gatekeeper-exhibitor is successful) and be able to somehow control the channel price charged per subscriber and promote its carriage as well as ratings. Though the differentiated image created by the employing of programming (product) differentiation is the most readily observable strategy in the industry, other strategic actions also contribute to the process of gaining differential advantages.

Note that when the industry is observed as a whole under the expected "monopolistic competition" market structure dynamics, though the establishment of relatively differential advantages is essential to every industry member, a certain degree of "strategic independence" would exist in every firm according to the theory of monopolistic competition, that is, eliciting no direct response from all rivals, the

channel distributors would only "selectively" interact with certain competitors' strategic actions. To rationalize such selective competition behavior and at the same time provide a more systematic framework for studying firm conduct, an analytical grouping technique which enables a bi-level market research approach for this particular market is posited. In essence, after looking at the industry as a whole, the author proposes to divide the market into similar subsets based on the key strategic dimensions of the industry to further scrutinize the dynamic competitive behavior of the multichannel media firms in a group (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3: AN INDUSTRY-GROUP BI-LEVEL COMPETITION ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK



Intra-Group Competition

Moving away from using "industry" as an unit of analysis, we can now examine the industry as composed by some intra-industry groups and apply the economic model of oligopolistic market structure to analyze the intra-group competition dynamics.

Channel distributors within the same strategic group resemble one another in their choice of strategic actions. They recognize their

mutual dependence relationship as in an oligopolistic market structure by taking each other's changes in action policies into consideration and realizing that any change in conduct would cause strategic responses from their competitors. Such mutual dependency and strategic interaction would be even more intense when the number of firms in a strategic group is fairly small due to the exhibitor's preference in avoiding excessive internal competition among the channels in its package. The relative size of the firms within a group also considerably influence the degree of mutual dependence among the firms. The more equal the relative size between distributors,¹¹ the more attention would be paid to the interdependence. If a multichannel strategic group is comprised of few firms that are very unequal in size, the smaller firms' strategic actions would have less of an impact and thus would be taken less seriously by the group leaders.

As the channel distributors in the same strategic group recognize their interdependence in the group, it is plausible for them to adopt a cooperative behavior pattern. They may try to jointly maximize profit by cooperating in various business conduct. For example, these distributors may try to "split" popular programming by avoiding bidding wars for big name programs. Nevertheless, as mentioned previously, such congruent conduct would only be preferred when firms actually realize a substantial degree of mutual dependence. Acting as oligopolists in a strategic group, the interdependent channel distributors are expected to follow a certain pricing pattern in the competition process. It is anticipated that the dominant distributor in a strategic group would act as a price leader in setting rates for the strategic group members. Note that such a price leadership model

may not be followed by a new entrant to the strategic group or the whole market since financial incentives are usually needed in establishing a channel carriage base under a bundled product offering scheme.

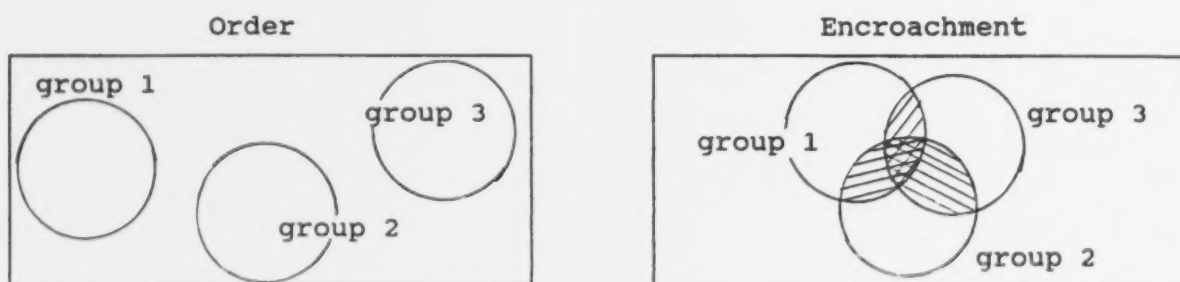
Inter-Group Competition

As the multichannel industry is hypothesized to comprise various strategic groups, the overall competition/rivalry pattern of the whole industry can be characterized by the nature and interaction of these strategic groups. There are factors which are expected to influence the competition intensity and pattern between different multichannel media strategic groups in the market. To restate Porter's conclusions, these include the strategic distance between groups, the market interdependence among groups, and the number and size distribution of groups.

Considering the complementary nature of channel bundling and the offering of multiple channels as the major attraction of the multichannel media product, a certain degree of strategic distance between different strategic groups in the distribution stage is actually a necessary market phenomenon. If distributors in various strategic groups choose to engage in very diverse strategic actions, the overall industry competitiveness should become less intensive since these groups are thus "geographically" separate in very diverse habitats in the marketplace. By selecting different niches in the environment, these strategic groups avoid any unnecessary competitive behavior and prosper together by sharing what the environment has to offer. On the other hand, if the groups are populated close to each

other with no definite and clear boundaries, encroachment may occur and in order to survive, fierce competition may result in defending their strategic territories (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 4: PATTERNS OF STRATEGIC GROUPS CONFIGURATION



The concept of market interdependence refers to the degree to which different strategic groups are competing for the same media consumers. In the multichannel media industry since the product is actually programming service, it can be more specifically translated into the degree to which different strategic groups are offering similar content-type programming. That is, if the strategic groups are in general offering more specialized taste programming aimed to attract different special groups of media consumers, there is less market interdependence. However, if various strategic groups are offering intersecting niches, that is, if more general appeal channels are offered to the media consumers who have more common-content program tastes, it may allow the viewers to choose more freely among these general content channels, under such circumstances, the market interdependence becomes higher in the industry. In essence, the more interdependent the market is, the more severe the rivalry that will result between groups in the multichannel media industry.

Finally, the number and size distribution of the strategic groups are critically related to the overall industry competitiveness as well. If the size of various strategic groups is unevenly distributed, it is anticipated that the industry strategic competition may be more active as large size strategic group configurations may tend to be unstable since less successful channel distributors in the group may try to become more competitive by altering their market strategies to obtain differential advantages which may in turn gradually lead them into a different strategic group. The total number of strategic groups in a multichannel media industry influences the market competition in a way depending on the degree of "market interdependence" in that market. It is expected that in a higher market interdependent multichannel media industry, if the number of strategic groups increases, the probability of strategic territory encroachment also increases. Thus, the intergroup competition would be more intensified. On the other hand, in a relatively low market interdependent industry, if the number of strategic groups increases, the intergroup competition would actually be lessened since the firms are now clustered into "finer" and "more defined" niche habitats with less probabilities for confrontation.

Next, the linkage between different strategic groups and their expected performances will be postulated according to the concept of within group competition and mobility barriers which would demonstrate the possible differences in performance by different strategic groups within the same multichannel media industry.

Intra-Industry Group Performance

When one discusses "performance" under an industrial economics approach, the factors related to the measurement of society welfare,

such as efficiency, progressiveness, price stability, and equitable distribution of output, are the descriptors for the market result. Though most of these macro measures of industry performance provide public authority a direct ascertainment of policy needs in a society, they are too broad for the microeconomic study of a specific market conduct-performance relationship. Furthermore, they provide very little functional information to the business practitioners. It is anticipated that the general business level performance indication--profitability would furnish a more appropriate measurement for industry as well as group performance for the multichannel media industry.

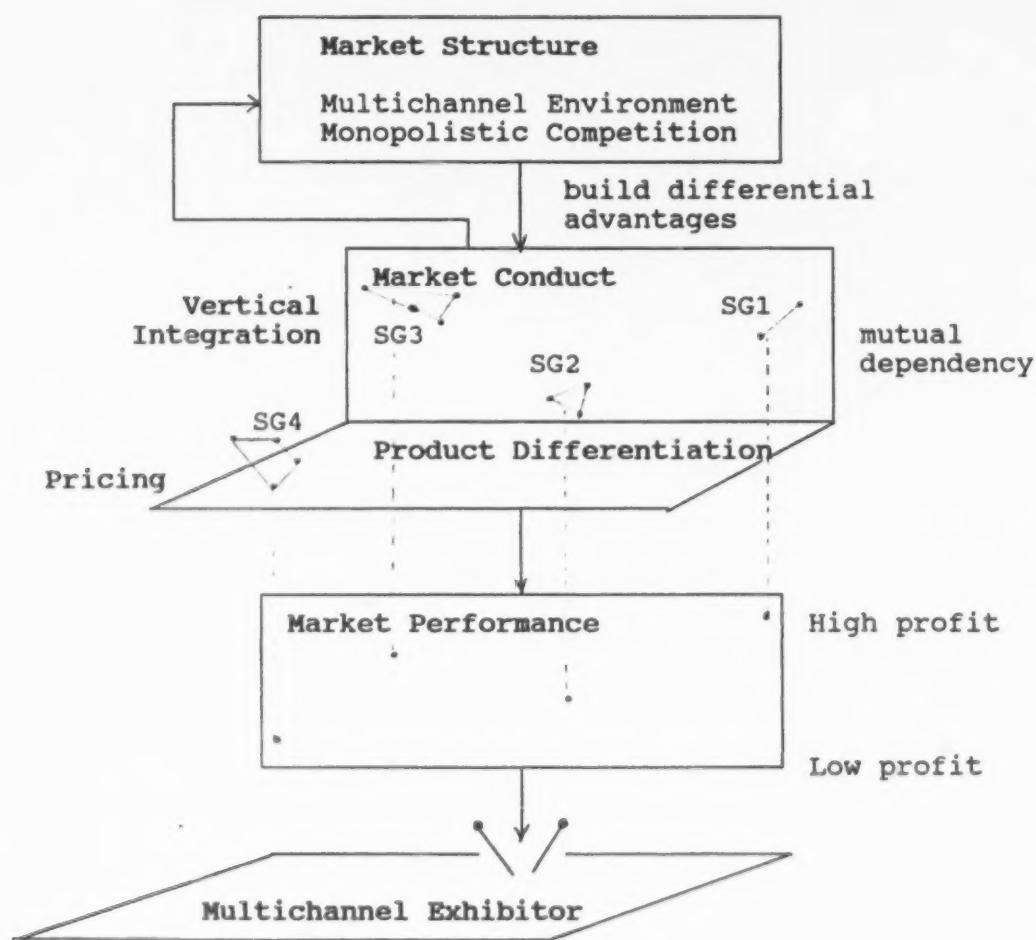
The degree of rivalry in a strategic group largely influences the profit potential of that group as fierce competitive actions may either increase costs or decrease prices and thus lower the overall group profitability. In addition to the competitiveness factor, the economic notion of mobility barriers which explains the structural as well as behavioral forces that keep potential entrants from easily entering certain strategic group and eroding the group profits also partially explains the overall profitability of a strategic group, longitudinally. The differences in firms' strategic approaches which cluster strategic groups within the industry imply differences in firms' business operations that often become the source of mobility barriers (same notion as for industry entry barriers)--product differentiation, economies of scale, and absolute cost advantages--vary by strategic groups.¹² In essence, according to the concept, channel distributors who choose successful approaches in the previously mentioned key strategic dimensions and are able to execute such strategies in an operational sense would not be easily imitated by

other distributors because of the insulation created by their mobility barriers, and their profit rates would not be led toward equality because of the easy entry of the new competitors. Furthermore, the strategic groups which possess high mobility barriers are expected to be not only relatively more insulated from competition from the outsiders but also have superior bargaining power with the exhibitor as well as the producer and thus would enjoy even higher profits.

Basically, as the configuration of strategic groups within the multichannel media industry and the intensity of inter-group rivalry affect the potential industry profit, the intensity of intra-group competition also influence the potential groups profit. With different degree of group competitiveness, it is expected that intra-group performance of different strategic groups would not be alike as some strategies are better than others and give their strategic groups superior performance. Thus, firms belonging to better performing strategic groups that are highly insulated by their group mobility barriers may have the opportunity to achieve above industry average profit. In addition, each strategic group not only has different degree of mobility barriers but also different degree of interdependent and cooperative actions in the group to maintain the height of mobility barriers which may result in different degree of profitability for the group as well. In essence, it is proposed that different performance of multichannel firms within the industry is no longer solely related to managerial inefficiency, inefficiencies of scale, and other excessive conduct relative to the "industry." A multichannel media firm's performance would be more readily assessed vis a vis its strategic group configuration and how well the strategic group does

compared to other groups in the industry.¹³ The proposed industry-group bi-level strategic competition model is illustrated in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5: AN MULTICHANNEL MEDIA INTRA-INDUSTRY STRATEGIC COMPETITION MODEL (SG = Strategic Group)



Conclusion

Since there is no existing model of competition in the field of mass media dealing with the fairly new multichannel media industry, the author tries to examine the general market conduct of the firm members

in the industry, subsequently develop some operation patterns that characterize the industry, and apply IO economics and strategic management theories to formulate an industry-group bi-level analytical framework for studying the unique media industry. In general, a monopolistically competitive market competition dynamic is expected at the industry level but a strategic grouping process is suggested to further assess the interdependent relationship by group members due to the heterogeneous market nature observed in the industry. Note that the author does not treat "premium" channel services as part of the multichannel media market discussed so far. Since the channel financing method (premium only), the per subscriber charge approach, and the consumer demand function of a premium channel service are very different from those of a channel offered by exhibitors in a bundled fashion, it is anticipated that the bi-level strategic competition model would not be as appropriate for analyzing premium channel distributors.¹⁴

An important rationale for considering this supplemental group approach based on the firms' strategic conduct is to enable business practitioners as well as public authorities to better identify, understand, and further analyze the behavior of the competing multichannel distributors under a more comprehensive and systematic competition framework.

In essence, the development of such a competition or rivalry model not only contributes to more understanding of competitive behavior of firms, but also provides business practitioners an analytical framework for strategic planning. To be more specific, for multichannel firms which are in the "superior" performing strategic groups, knowledge of

the strategic conduct and entry barriers that protect them can help their strategic planners in making decisions about where to recommend further investment to protect and reinforce those key strategies. On the other hand, a firm which wants to move to another strategic group may be able to identify a potentially vulnerable strategic dimension which may better match its competitive skills and strengths and hence provide the firm with a "gateway" to entry into that strategic group. By recognizing the dynamics of such inter-group and intra-group patterns, the firms can make more effective competitive strategy decisions.

Since it is essential to understand the nature of competition in the industry before implementing any policies to promote competition, when considering the productivity and efficiency with which resources are used depends on whether or not firms make the best choices of strategy and business operation, the public authority, acting as a public trustee, can also benefit from the bi-level competition framework developed for the multichannel media industry. Due to the market heterogeneity and some special operation patterns discussed previously, a traditional market examination of the overall industry alone may not generate sufficient market information, provide correct assumptions of the firms' competitive conduct, and/or develop a realistic evaluation of the market competitiveness for the policy maker to make the right decision. In essence, the proposed industry-group competition model provides a valuable theoretical link for the public authority to investigate the appropriateness of market structure and conduct of the multichannel media industry with the consideration of its unique market nature.

Endnotes

1. The media firms in the production stage are like program "manufacturers." However, unlike the other "physical goods" industries with manufacturers generally act as leaders to the wholesalers and retailers in the market channel relationship, in most of the mass media industries, it is the firms in the "distribution" stage who possess the most market power and are recognized as well as function as the actual program (product) providers of the media service.
2. Though when a channel distributor applies "free of charge" strategy to obtain system carriages, theoretically, the subscribers are no longer direct consumers of the channel.
3. When a media service provides a more "quantitative" audience profile to the advertisers, they are getting "mass audiences" who share general demographics, lifestyles, and other audience characteristics. On the other hand, when a more "qualitative" audience profile is offered, the advertisers are getting limited number of audiences but more specialized, targeted group of people who may be of value to some special product marketers.
4. Under the print regulatory model, the mass medium would enjoy a "laissez-faire" public policy approach and generally protected by the freedom of speech constitutional right. Under the common-carrier model, the mass medium would then be regulated as a public utility which has to offer service in a nondiscriminatory manner and is not responsible to the content it carries. The broadcast model requires the mass medium to be licensed to operate as a public trustee which should perform according to the public interest, convenience, and necessity. Thus it provides the heaviest conduct regulation among the three models.
5. In general, SMATV systems operate is not subject to the cable television regulation. However, because the contract between the SMATV system operator and the landlord often prohibit the local cable system to serve the residents within the SMATV service area, there have been some legal challenges on the landlord's exclusivity right. Furthermore, some cable program networks have filed suits against certain SMATV operators for carrying their channels without proper authorization.
6. Currently, a cable television system operator is often regarded as a local monopolist as other multichannel media services, such as DBS (TVROs), SMATV, MMDS, are not treated as direct competitors to the local cable service since these alternative services are not as universally available as cable television systems. Most of the time, these services are offered in the area not served by cable.
7. With more and more programs produced originally for cable television, cable channel distributors are now able to generate

revenues by acting as program syndicators to sell these originated programs to the U.S. as well as foreign markets.

8. It was found that cable viewers tend to watch a "subset" of channels regularly. Such "channel loyal" behavior over cable service is anticipated to be related to cable's offer of specialized program content which may gradually develop viewers' program-type loyalty and the means of simplifying choice process when large number of channels are offered in the service. For more information on cable channel loyalty viewing behavior, see Carrie Heeter and B. Greenberg's Cableviewing.
9. A new channel distributor may be more able to obtain financing from the exhibitor than regular banks or loaning institutions since the exhibitor would be more informed about the current industry situation and thus in a better position to judge the risk involved in the investment.
10. Though the strategy of quantity discounts may be offered depending on the total number of subscribers served by the system.
11. The size of a channel distributor can be measured by the total number of subscribers served by the exhibitors who carry the channel. The audience viewing record (ratings) can also provide more information on its relative market position among all the distributors.
12. The source of entry barriers can come from the absolute cost advantages generated from the existing firms' patents, certain efficient production methods, and other favorable operation circumstances, economies of scales which lower the cost of producing a product, and product differentiation, advertising, R & D, which put existing firms in a position that requires the potential entrants substantial market efforts to match. For more information on the subject, see Woodward's Industrial Organization: Theory and Practice.
13. Thus, a firm may be able to have pockets of affluence within an industry even if the industry as a whole is performing only moderately well in terms of profits.
14. Premium channel distributors may either charge a flat fee (much higher than the bundled channels' per subscriber charges) or tie the fee to the retail price charged by the multichannel exhibitors (e. g. The premium distributors may charge 45% or 50% of the retail premium rate). In addition, researchers normally study the demand for basic cable and pay cable services separately as they often conclude that the nature of the demand for the two cable services is very different. See Webb's The Economics of Cable Television and Ducey, Krugman, and Eckrich's "Predicting Market Segments in the Cable Industry: The Basic and Pay Subscribers," Journal of Broadcasting, Vol. 27:2, p. 155.

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MINORITIES AND COMMUNICATION

DIVISION

Comparison of Sources of Information
for Black State Legislators

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Annual Convention Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication,
Minneapolis, August 1990.

Comparison of Sources of Information for Black State Legislators

Models of the political process suggest that elected officials hear constituent concerns and respond. But research shows that some legislators listen more to "insiders"—friends, associates, lobbyists and fellow lawmakers—than to other sources—even to find what constituents are thinking!¹

What about black legislators, present in state legislatures in greater numbers than ever before? What sources of information influence their decisions?

Should we predict findings different from those of other studies, mostly of white state legislators? On the one hand, the imperatives of office-holding (e.g., committee specialization; need for technical information on demand; need for cooperation among legislators) may create for black legislators the same general environment for, or patterns of, information use.

On the other hand, we cannot assume that new minority legislators adopt the majority's "rules of the game." Disenchanted with (perhaps having campaigned against) the politics of influence, they may be less willing to deal with the purposive sources who people the statehouse.

The assumption guiding this research is that it makes a difference whether purposive professional or personal "insiders" provide the arguments—and the view² of constituent opinion—on which any legislator makes a decision. Riffe wrote:

"(O)ne might wonder how much the legislator's view of decision options, of the legislative process, and, particularly, of the electorate and its thinking, might be influenced by inside sources--trusted personal contacts, as well as colleagues and special interest groups--whose impartiality, from the public's point of view, is by definition suspect. It is questionable, if not doubtful, whether those sources' continued status as relied-upon insiders depends to any extent upon how well the public is served by its representatives" (emphasis in original).

This study examined sources of information for black state legislators, in-

cluding newspapers, television and radio; colleagues/fellow legislators; special interest representatives or "lobbyists"; and "family, friends and non-professional contacts." Each was examined as a source for professional needs (i.e., for job decisions; for news of what's going on around the capital; and for tapping constituent opinion) and, for comparison, non-professional or personal matters.

Hypotheses and Rationale

Studies show legislators turning for specialized job decision information³ to purposive "insider" sources--lobbyists,⁴ expert colleagues⁵ or committee members⁶--because specialists provide needed technical information on demand. But a study of Alabama legislators found that, given the chance, many rated personal "insiders"--family, friends and non-professional contacts--even more important as sources for job decisions than statehouse insiders.⁷ Nonetheless, H1 predicted that: For providing information useful in job decisions, professional "insiders" will be judged significantly more useful than other sources.

Officials must track "which way the wind is blowing" with political opponents and allies. Busy Washington lawmakers use the press to learn high-visibility colleagues' thinking on issues,⁸ but at lower levels of government, professional insiders (colleagues, lobbyists) prevail for such news.⁹ Therefore, H2 predicted: For news of what's going on in state government, professional "insiders" will be judged significantly more useful than other sources.

Elected officials must hear the "voice of the people." Dunn called the press an "instant poll" performing "a substantial linkage function."¹⁰ Others call news media "opinion-to-policy linkage mechanisms"¹¹ that tie electorate to elected¹² and reveal "the systematic agenda of community concerns."¹³

But the Alabama study found personal insiders and colleagues and lobbyists supplanted news media even as sources for information on public opinion and con-

stituent concerns. Still, H3 predicted: For learning about public opinion or constituent concerns, the news media will be judged significantly more useful than other sources.

Finally, as a point of comparison, H4 predicted: For personal matters, personal "insiders" will be judged significantly more useful than other sources.

Method

Mail questionnaires were sent to the nation's 387 black state legislators, but only 343 were deliverable. Data were obtained on 113 legislators (33% of deliverables). Despite the low return rate, the sample did not significantly underrepresent the known geographic distribution of black state legislators.

Respondents used a five-point scale (ranging from "Not at All Useful" to "Very Useful") to rate 24 combinations of information type and information source. Specifically, the statements read: "To what extent do each of the following provide information on what issues are on the mind of your constituents; about what is happening in state government; useful in helping you make decisions in your job; or useful in your personal life?" After each of the four statements, six sources were listed (family, friends, non-"professional" contacts; colleagues/fellow legislators; special interest groups/"lobbyists"; newspapers; television; radio).

Of course, these are only reports of use of information sources, and the information types do not exhaust the domain of professional information needs.

Findings and Discussion

Respondents (99%) were Democrat, averaged 48.7 years of age and 20.9 years of education. Only 4% were from towns smaller than 25,000 people, and 71% were from cities larger than 100,000.

Table 1 provides source mean ratings for each information type (higher mean = more useful); an ordering of means (a through e) within information types; and

significant (by t-tests) contrasts. Some significant contrasts are indicated between contiguous ordered means; others are between non-contiguous means. With 15 contrasts in each information type, the a priori alpha was set to a conservative $0.05/15$, or $.003$ (only p-values of $.003$ or smaller were treated as significant).

Five of six sources of statehouse information scored above the scale midpoint (3.0), while four personal information sources were below 3.0. Lobbyists' ratings for personal matters were the lowest of 24 means. The range among means was smallest (.74) for statehouse news; the largest was for personal matters (2.04).

Personal insiders had the highest ratings across information types (overall mean of 3.70), an early hint that their influence extends to professional matters, as found previously. Television had the lowest overall mean, 2.73.

H1 predicted professional insiders would be significantly more useful for job decision information. Despite clear demarcation among sources evidenced in Table 1 (see the underscores separating sources a and b from c; and c from d, f and e), the hypothesis was not clearly supported, because personal insiders were more useful for job decisions than lobbyists, and were as useful as colleagues. Black legislators may use technical data from lobbyists and consult with colleagues, but they also touch base with personal insiders.

Similarity of insiders' views to constituents' is, of course, problematic. (Some could have interpreted this source as including constituents, though "non-'professional'" was employed to specify interpersonal contacts outside the legislator-lobbyist, legislator-legislator, or legislator-constituent contexts.)

Personal insiders, colleagues and lobbyists were significantly more useful than news media. Preference for statehouse insiders over news media hinges traditionally on media inability to provide needed specialized information when it's needed. That argument, however, does not apply for personal insiders.

H2, predicting professional insider dominance for tracking "which way the wind blows" in the capital, was not supported, even though colleagues and lobbyists did attain the highest usefulness ratings and were significantly more useful than all sources except the third-ranked source, newspapers.

Some would consider the hypothesis "generally" supported because professional insiders were significantly different from all but newspapers, and because of the conservative 0.003 alpha level used with the multiple simultaneous contrasts. However, the hypothesis, as worded, implicitly requires clear demarcation between professional insider ratings and all other sources. That clear demarcation between professional insiders and newspapers was found in the Alabama study cited earlier, primarily because legislators in that study gave far higher usefulness ratings for colleagues and lobbyists. The "distance" between insiders and newspapers was smaller for black lawmakers.

H3, predicting news media dominance for learning constituent concerns, was also not supported. Personal insiders and colleagues were rated significantly more useful than all three news media. Most troublesome, news media were not as useful as lobbyists. Personal insiders were more useful than lobbyists.

What happened to Dunn's "linkage function"? The Alabama study also showed personal and professional insider dominance for constituent matters, but news media fared poorly compared to insiders, and were generally rated useful (3.0+).

Here, two of three news media mean ratings were below the midpoint. In fact, only 4 of the total 12 ratings for news media were above the usefulness scale midpoint.

News media ratings may reflect generalized "adversarial" antipathy toward the press, and black officials' sentiment that white-owned news media are not useful because they do such a poor job covering their constituency--the black community.

16

H4, that personal "insiders" would be significantly more useful for personal matters than all other sources, was supported. But colleagues were also significantly more useful for personal matters than all but personal insiders.

Just as personal insiders had influence in job decisions and monitoring constituent concerns (discussed with H1 and H2), the influence of colleagues in some leaders' personal matters is equally intriguing.

In sum, the tests of hypotheses suggest that black legislators also use sources "whose impartiality, from the public's point of view, is by definition
17
suspect": colleagues, personal friends and associates, and lobbyists.

And, the ratings suggest some "functional overlap": i.e., sources performing functions normally associated with other sources.

Table 2 explores this further, recasting the Table 1 data in ranks. Column ranks summarize which source is best for particular information types, while row ranks show "what each source does best."

Column ranks show clearly the dominance of personal insiders outside their "natural" domain: first for personal matters and for job decisions and constituent concerns. Colleagues, whose "natural" specialty is statehouse news, rank near the top for constituent concerns, job decisions and personal matters. The overall importance of these two sources is shown in each source's average column rank.

What each source does best (row) seldom matches its column ranks. E.g., personal insiders are the best source of constituent concerns (column), but providing constituent concerns is the third-best (row) function of personal insiders.

In one case, ranks match: personal insiders are the best for personal matters, and do better at providing personal matters than at providing other information.

In most cases, however, sources "share" a role. Colleagues, better at providing job decision information than at providing other information types, are only

the second-best source of job decision information, a status they "share" with lobbyists and personal insiders.

How much of this functional overlap is there among the sources? When row rank profiles are used to compute Spearman's rho between pairs of sources, the Table 3 matrix results. Though only four ranks (for four information types) were used to compute rho, three crude "clusters" of sources are evident: ranks for the three news media are perfectly correlated; lobbyists and colleagues are significantly, positively correlated; and personal insider sources are uncorrelated with lobbyists and colleagues, and perfectly but negatively correlated with news media.

Conclusions

Future research should pursue more precise source roles, by adding new information types: e.g., constituent reaction to a lawmaker's bills; what's happening "back home" when the legislature is in session; background information on bills before the legislature; election year campaign issues; and the lawmaker's own--and his election-year opponent's--campaign strengths and weaknesses.

The array of sources can be expanded: civic leaders; political party leaders; non-profit or volunteer groups; or academic institutions or "think tanks." "Colleagues and fellow legislators" needs refinement; rating such a source, is a black legislator rating black colleagues with shared goals and perspectives, or white colleagues, alternately allies and opponents? And the roles of direct constituent contact and the lawmaker's staff advisors need examining.

This study's initial assumption was that, despite arguments for their use (e.g., convenience, time constraints, need for specialized information), the influence of purposive insiders--professional or personal--was at least problematic, and that constituents could be short-changed. Based on the data found in this survey, that ~~same~~ potential dysfunction pertains to black legislators.

Like officials in earlier studies, black lawmakers turn to professional statehouse insiders, but are also influenced by personal insiders. As Riffe noted, these insiders' prosperity depends very little on how well the public is served. But black legislators are less enthusiastic about statehouse insiders for statehouse news. And their ratings of news media usefulness are generally lower than previous studies showed.

It is beyond this study's scope to do more than speculate about whether decisions lawmakers make on the basis of these--or any--sources of information are "good," "right" or "wrong"; or to judge whether constituents are poorly served if representatives do act in accord with the goals of purposive sources.

Still, speculative, "worst case" conclusions about potential dysfunctions are not just an academic exercise. Understanding elected officials' decision making process precedes capacity to affect those decisions.

One of the most important aspects of legislative representation is representational "style."¹⁸ Representational style ranges from delegate style (the officeholder literally carries the will of constituents, acting in accord with that will, and continually reassessing that will) to trustee style (the officeholder has been endorsed by public mandate to act, in essence, however s/he sees fit while away at the statehouse).

The danger of black or white legislators' constituents' being short-changed depends of course on the extent to which legislators move from the "delegate" style that may gain them election, to "trustee" style, without their being aware that they are hearing only purposive insiders along the way.

Notes

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14. Riffe, op. cit.

15. The sample did not differ significantly from the population's regional distribution: South, East, Midwest and West (chi-square=2.21, 3 d.f., $p>.05$). Addresses were from the then-current Black Elected Officials: A National Roster, 1986, 15th edition (Washington, D.C.: Joint Center for Political Studies).

16. Daniel Riffe, Don Sneed and Roger L. Van Ommeren, "The Press and Black Elected Officials at Three Levels of Public Office." Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, D.C., 1989.

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TABLE 1
^a
Mean Usefulness Score of Information Sources for Black
State Legislators, By Type of Information

Information Type:	Job Decisions	State Government	Constituent Concerns	Personal Life	overall mean
Source:					
a) Personal Insiders: family, friends and non- "professional" contacts	3.84	2.89	3.81	4.25	3.70
b) Professional Insiders: colleagues, fellow legislators	3.75	3.63	3.55	3.89	3.51
c) Professional Insiders: special interest groups or "lobbyists"	3.47	3.47	3.29	2.21	3.11
d) Newspapers	2.83	3.33	3.02	2.33	2.88
e) Television	2.67	3.04	2.88	2.34	2.73
f) Radio	2.72	3.07	2.98	2.32	2.77
(n of cases by info. type)	(100)	(100)	(104)	(91)	

Ordered means:

within information type ^b —				
underscore denotes	a	b	a	a
significant differences	b	c	b	b
between contiguous sources	c	d	c	e
	d	f	d	d
	f	e	f	f
	e	a	e	c

Additional significant contrasts between non-contiguous pairs of means:

Job Decisions: a,d; a,e; a,f; b,d; b,e; b,f; c,e; c,f.
State Government: a,b; a,c; b,e; b,f; c,e; c,f; d,e.
Constituent Concerns: a,c; a,d; a,e; a,f; b,d; b,e; b,f; c,e.
Personal Matters: a,c; a,d; a,e; a,f; b,c; b,d; b,f.

^a

A five-point scale was used, with poles labeled "Not At All Useful" and "Very Useful." The higher the mean, the more useful the source.

^b

Significant differences among source means within information types were determined using pairwise (or correlated samples) t-tests between variable means. Because of the multiple— $(n(n-1))/2$ or 15—comparisons within each information type, however, the a priori global alpha level (.05) was corrected (to $[(.05)/15]$, or approximately .003). Thus, pairwise differences were considered significant only if $p =$ or $<.003$ for the computed value of t .

TABLE 2

Usefulness Rank of Information Sources for Black
State Legislators, by Type of Information

(column rank) [row rank]

Information Type: Source:	Job Decisions	State Government	Constituent Concerns	Personal Life	mean column rank
a) Personal Insiders: family, friends and non- "professional" contacts	(1) [2]	(6) [4]	(1) [3]	(1) [1]	(2.25)
b) Professional Insiders: colleagues, fellow legislators	(2) [1]	(1) [2]	(2) [3]	(2) [4]	(1.75)
c) Professional Insiders: special interest groups or "lobbyists"	(3) [1.5]	(2) [1.5]	(3) [3]	(6) [4]	(3.50)
d) Newspapers	(4) [3]	(3) [1]	(4) [2]	(4) [4]	(3.75)
e) Television	(6) [3]	(5) [1]	(6) [2]	(3) [4]	(5.00)
f) Radio	(5) [3]	(4) [1]	(5) [2]	(5) [4]	(4.75)

TABLE 3

Correlations (ρ) of Source Usefulness
for Four Information Types

	Radio	TV	Papers	Lobby- ists	Colleagues
Family, friends, non-professional	<u>-1.00</u>	<u>-1.00</u>	<u>-1.00</u>	-.55	-.40
Colleagues, fellow legislators	.40	.40	.40	<u>.95</u>	
Lobbyists	.65	.65	.65		
Newspapers	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.00</u>			
Television	<u>1.00</u>	-			

Note: Underscored coefficients are significant at the .05 level.

**How Television Audiences Cumulate:
An Examination of Reach and Frequency
Using People Meters**

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**How Television Audiences Cumulate:
An Examination of Reach and Frequency
Using People Meters**

INTRODUCTION

Audience ratings are widely used by advertisers as a measure of exposure to television programs and ads. But audience ratings present only a "snapshot" of the audience at a given time, and they cannot provide any information on audience behavior.

When time-series data on viewing are available, researchers can examine audience behavior. Some of the major concepts that address how audiences cumulate over time are reach, frequency, repeat viewing and gross ratings points. **Reach** is a measure (usually a percent) of how many people in a selected demographic were exposed at all during a given schedule. Each person exposed to the schedule is counted just once, no matter how many times they saw the ad or program. **Frequency** is a measure (usually expressed as an average) of how many times people in a selected demographic were exposed to an ad or program in a given schedule. **Repeat viewing** is the percentage of viewers who saw two consecutive episodes of a regular program. **Gross rating points** (or GRPs) are calculated by multiplying reach and frequency, and are an overall measure of the size of the audience exposed to a given schedule. Media planners frequently must decide, for a given number of GRPs, if they should seek high reach or high frequency. Since reach and frequency are inversely related, the only way to increase both is to spend more money.

Until recently, time-series data on viewing were difficult or expensive to obtain. **Diaries**, the major source of viewing data, are typically kept for only one week at a time, so they lack information on weekly exposure to television.

Nielsen's NTI panel, traditionally the main source of national viewing data, used set meters (Audimeters) and, while they did remain in place for longer periods of time, they lacked information on individual viewing patterns. Consequently, media planners used graphs or developed mathematical models for estimating reach and frequency (Rust, 1986).

The adoption of people meters by A.C. Nielsen and others has largely solved the problem of obtaining high-quality time-series data on viewing. Like set meters, people meters remain in place for long periods of time. Like diaries, people meters record individual-level viewing data. Finally, then, advertisers have access to a regular source of time-series viewing data.

This paper explores how audiences cumulate over an eight-week period of time. The data are from people meters operated by AGB Television Research, which for about a year competed with Nielsen as a national ratings service in the U.S. Specific attention is paid to the two main building blocks of media planning, reach and frequency, and how they vary across program types, channel affiliations, and daypart.

FREQUENCY OF EXPOSURE

Given the choice of going for reach or frequency with a given number of GRPs, when should a planner favor a high-frequency approach? According to McGann & Russell (1981):

A high-frequency objective may be appropriate when the product is likely to appeal to a broad group of prospects and when many reminder-type impressions are desirable. This kind of objective may be implied by advertising for the typical fast-food franchise. In such situations, the media schedule usually contains a relatively smaller number of insertions per vehicle. Also, greater use of the "perishable" media, particularly the electronic and outdoor media, is consistent with a high-frequency objective. (p. 292)

Just how much frequency is needed in a campaign has been the subject of much research. It is widely believed in the advertising industry that just one exposure to a message is wasted, and at least three exposures of most ads are necessary for any recall value (Naples, 1979; Sissors & Surmanek, 1982). At the other extreme, at somewhere between seven and 15 exposures, viewers get sick of the ad and each subsequent exposure has a negative value.

An examination of studies of repeat viewing (a measure of frequency) in the U.S. and Great Britain done over the last 15 years shows that it is getting increasingly difficult to obtain high frequency in a television schedule.

In their pioneering study, conducted in England, Goodhardt, Ehrenberg & Collins (1975) found that 55 percent of the viewers who watched a show watched it again the next week.

Subsequent studies have found lower repeat viewing levels. Using Arbitron diary data, Barwise, Ehrenberg and Goodhardt (1982) examined viewing levels and patterns in the U.S., where there are often more channels. Among daily daytime programs, they found repeat viewing to average 50 percent on network-affiliated channels and 30 percent on independent channels. For prime-time shows, repeat viewing averaged 46 percent.

Patterns of daytime repeat viewing in Indianapolis were examined by Kamerer, Mundorf, Wakshlag & Bhatia (1986), who found overall repeat levels of 67 percent. Barwise (1986) used three different data sources to examine repeat viewing in the U.S., and found average repeat ranging from 48 to 36 percent.

Studies using people meters as a data source have found still lower repeat viewing. Ehrenberg & Wakshlag (1987) found 24 to 28 percent repeat in Boston, and Kamerer (1988), using a subset of the same data base, found only 16 percent repeat among individuals and 20 percent repeat in households. Soong (1988) found

28 percent repeat viewing in Denver households and even lower repeat among individual demographic breakouts.

Two explanations have been offered for the apparent decline in repeat viewing levels (Kamerer, 1988). One is that, as viewers have more choices (cable, VCRs, remote control and home video), their viewing is spread over more channels, thereby lowering repeat. The other explanation is that, as data sources have improved, repeat viewing estimates have become more accurate. Beville (1985), for example, notes that diaries tend to overestimate popular shows, heavily promoted shows, and "usual viewing." All of these factors could artificially inflate diary-based reported repeat viewing levels.

While repeat viewing levels are low, audiences do view with some measurable patterns. Webster & Wakshlag (1983) note that availability to view is a necessary condition for program choice. The prime factor in not repeat viewing is lack of availability, rather than disloyalty. Barwise et al (1982) and Kamerer et al (1986) found that when viewers are available at the same time for two consecutive episodes, they will overwhelmingly choose the same program both times.

Figure 1, taken from the database used in this study, illustrates a typical frequency distribution of viewing over time. Viewing for five continuing dramas (Dallas, Dynasty, Falcon Crest, Hill St. Blues and St. Elsewhere) is graphed across eight weeks. While between 17 and 25 percent of the sample viewed one and only one episode, the percentage of the sample viewing two, three, or anywhere up to eight episodes is much smaller. In fact, less than two percent of the sample watched five or more episodes of any of these programs, and no one watched all eight episodes of these programs. For these shows, the average frequency of viewing in households ranged from 1.9 to 2.1 out of eight episodes.

The steep falloff of the curve in Figure 1 is a readily observed aspect of mass behavior. Figure 2 illustrates the frequency distribution of household viewing of

five news programs (60 Minutes, 20/20, NBC Evening News, CBS Evening News, Channel 7 Evening News) across eight weeks. While the falloff is not as great for these news programs as it is for the continuing dramas in Figure 1 (note that the Y axis is scaled differently in the two graphs), and while there is more variation in the falloff, the overall trend is the same. The average frequency in this example ranges from 1.8 to 2.6 (out of eight).

Repeat viewing studies have found that exposure to multiple episodes of a program does vary according to several factors. Some program types, due to their content, attract regular viewers more than other types. Barwise et al (1982) and Kamberer et al (1986) found that soap operas have high repeat viewing. Kamberer (1988) found news shows to have high repeat viewing, and talk shows to have low repeat viewing. Other variables found to have a significant effect on repeat viewing by Kamberer include channel affiliation and daypart. These variables will be reexamined, with frequency of exposure used as the dependent variable.

REACH

Given a fixed number of GRPs, reach is sometimes the most important goal of a campaign:

This situation is most likely to occur when the advertising is for a product class which is characterized by highly interested and well-informed prospective buyers...The advertising objective is not so much to create large numbers of reminder-type advertisements as to reach the largest possible percentage of this audience with an appealing, impressive message. In situations like this, a relatively large number of vehicles are scheduled, at relatively low numbers of insertions per vehicle. (McGann & Russell [1981], p. 292)

In exploring the reach of television channels, Barwise & Ehrenberg (1984) found evidence of "double jeopardy." This is a law of consumer behavior that states

that the fewer who choose a particular alternative, the fewer who "like" it. In this application, they found that less-watched channels have a) fewer viewers than the networks, who b) watch them less. In other words, it is difficult to build reach on public and independent channels, and the time spent with these channels per viewer is also low.

Program type has also been seen as being related to reach. According to Sissors & Surmanek (1982):

Programs that develop reach are those whose contents tend to change during a given telecast or from week to week. As the contents change, so do audience types. When movies are broadcast, with a drama one week and a comedy the next, two different audiences are likely to develop (with some overlap, of course). Movies, therefore, tend to develop more reach than frequency. But a soap opera broadcast five days a week, or 20 times a month, will tend to draw a relatively smaller audience but one with greater frequency of viewing (p. 69).

Following this, talk shows should have high reach, while other program types, such as sitcoms or dramas, should have lower reach. News shows and game shows are more difficult to characterize, in that they feature the same format for each episode (which should discourage reach) but have very different content from episode to episode (which should encourage reach). Kaminer (1988) found that news shows and game shows have higher-than-average repeat viewing (a measure of frequency) but the reach of these program types has not been explored.

Differential audience availability across dayparts should also affect reach. For example, during the daytime, the same viewers tend to be available from day to day, so reach should be low. During prime time, most viewers are available, so reach should be high. A confounding factor here is rating. To what extent is prime time reach high because of audience availability, and to what extent is it due simply to high ratings? If the above example is correct, then, with the effect of rating

removed, shows on in prime time should have higher reach than shows on during daytime.

Three analyses will examine reach in this study. First, does reach vary systematically by program type? Second, does reach vary systematically by channel affiliation? And third, does reach vary systematically by daypart? These analyses, combined with the frequency analyses outlined above, should help paint a picture of how a media planner can choose programs or categories of programs in order to meet reach and frequency goals.

METHOD

The data for this study are based upon responses from 650 adults (18 years and older) in 325 households. The sample frame is the Boston television market, defined by AGB as those counties which fall into either the Arbitron Area of Dominant Influence (ADI) or the Nielsen Designated Market Area (DMA) (AGB, 1986). Fifty-one percent of the sample was connected to cable TV service. Ehrenberg & Wakshlag (1987) noted that ratings in Boston tend to be lower than average.

The sample is based upon a multi-stage area probability sampling scheme, representative of the 1980 population (as measured by the U.S. Census) according to a matrix of 72 cells representing the following variables: metro/non-metro, household size, household weight of viewing (heavy, medium, light), and penetration of cable. Household income was stratified at the same time as geographic stratification. Sixty-five percent of the households who were asked to use people meters agreed to have them installed.

This study uses data supplied to Ehrenberg and Wakshlag (1987) by AGB Television Research. The data were collected during April and May, 1985, by AGB's people meter system.

Data were provided on viewing patterns for 104 programs. The programs, rather than individual viewing activity, form the unit of analysis. These programs encompass a wide variety of prime time, stripped, daily and weekend programming. Available information for each program includes program ratings, time and date the of the program, reach and average frequency, plus frequency distributions of how many people watched zero through eight shows in the schedule during the eight-week period.

Viewing for each of the 104 shows in this analysis is broken down into two subgroups: adults (18 years old and older), and households. The adult measurements are the "people" or individual measurements; household measurements provide a useful comparison because many audience studies are based upon household viewing.

Analysis of covariance was used in the analyses. This procedure is like analysis of variance in that it permits the examination of an intervally-scaled dependent variable (here, reach and frequency) broken down by a nominally-scaled independent variable (here, program type, affiliation, and daypart). In addition, analysis of covariance permits the modeling of an intervally-scaled control variable. Rating was entered as a control variable so the independent variable effects can be separated from rating effects.

RESULTS

Frequency Analysis. Table 1 illustrates the analysis for viewing frequency broken down by program type. Among adults, frequency varied significantly by program type ($F = 2.31, p < .052$). In terms of descriptive statistics, news shows and continuing dramas had an average frequency of 1.7 among adults, above the mean of 1.5. The types with the lowest frequencies among adults were talk shows (1.1) and children's shows (1.2). With the effect of rating removed (adjusted means), the types with the highest frequencies were game shows (1.8), followed by news shows and sitcoms (1.6 each), and the types with the lowest frequencies were continuing dramas and talk shows (1.3 each).

In households, frequency also varied significantly by program type ($F = 3.27, p < .01$). The general pattern was the same as for the adults analysis, but the frequencies were a bit higher (due to the viewing of several individuals as opposed to one individual in the adults analysis) and children's shows fared a bit better, with a frequency of 1.5, and an adjusted frequency of 1.7.

Table 2 illustrates that, among adults, frequency varied significantly across dayparts ($F_{3,99} = 17.71, p < .001$). Programs on network-affiliated channels had the highest frequency, whether the effect of rating was controlled (1.5) or not (1.6). Shows on independent and public channels had mean frequencies of 1.4, while shows on cable had a mean frequency of .6. In households, affiliation was a non-significant factor ($F_{3,99} = 1.39, p = .25$).

Frequency varied significantly across dayparts among adults (Table 3, $F_{4,98} = 3.40, p < .05$). While prime time shows had the highest raw frequency (1.6), their adjusted mean was only 1.2. Morning and Daytime relatively low raw means (1.3 and 1.4, respectively) but had much higher adjusted means (1.6).

In households, frequency also varied significantly across dayparts ($F_{4,98} = 8.70, p < .001$). Shows in prime time and in the early fringe period had the highest average frequency (1.8), followed by late night (1.7) and morning and daytime (1.5). With the effect of rating controlled, shows in the early fringe period had the highest frequency (1.9), followed by morning (1.8). Below the mean of 1.7 were shows in prime time (1.4) and late night (1.6).

Reach Analysis. Reach varied significantly across program type for adults (Table 4, $F_{6,93} = 3.01, p < .01$). Continuing dramas had a raw mean reach of 32 percent, followed by dramas at 21.8 percent and news shows at 14 percent. Below the mean of 12 percent were sitcoms (10.4 percent), game shows (5.5 percent), talk shows (4.3 percent) and children's shows (3.8 percent). With the effect of rating removed, continuing dramas and dramas still had the highest reach (14.5 and 14.3 percent, respectively), although the magnitude of the difference between the categories was much smaller. The program types with the smallest adjusted means were news (12.1), game (12.2 percent) and talk (12.3 percent). In households, program type was a nonsignificant factor ($F_{6,93} = 1.93, p = .08$).

Table 5 reports the results of the program reach broken down by affiliation analysis. Among adults, affiliation was a nonsignificant factor ($F_{3,99} = .70, p < .56$), but in households, it was significant ($F_{3,99} = 4.59, p < .01$). In households, shows on network affiliates had the highest reach in both raw means (33 percent) and adjusted means (15.7 percent). Shows on independent channels followed with 11 percent reach (13.6 percent adjusted). Shows on the public channel had 8.9 percent reach (13.4 percent adjusted), and shows on cable channels had .8 percent reach (11 percent adjusted).

Reach varied significantly across dayparts for both breakouts (Table 6). Among adults ($F_{4,98} = 8.88, p < .001$), shows in prime time had the highest reach (26.7 percent raw mean), followed by late night (17.9 percent). Below the mean of

11.7 were early fringe (8.9 percent), daytime (5.5 percent) and morning (4.1 percent). With the effect of rating held constant, late night shows had the highest mean (14.6 percent), followed by prime time (14.2 percent). The other dayparts were close together (morning, 11.8 percent; daytime, 11.3 percent; and early fringe, 11.2 percent).

In households ($F_{4,98} = 6.14, p < .001$), prime time shows had the highest reach, at 42.3 percent, followed by late night shows, at 30.6 percent. Reach for the other dayparts was much lower: in the early fringe, 16.9 percent; daytime, 13.9 percent; and in the morning, 13 percent. With the effect of rating removed, late night shows had the highest reach (26.2 percent), followed by prime time (24.6 percent), morning (22.9 percent), daytime (22.2 percent), and early fringe (20.8 percent).

DISCUSSION

Frequency. Generally, the average frequency of exposure is low. Among adults, it averaged only 1.5 episodes out of eight. In households, it averaged 1.7 episodes out of eight. This is in line with the results from recent repeat viewing studies, which show low repeat viewing.

From an advertiser's view, certain program types are better for building frequency than others. Continuing dramas, with their storylines that play out across episodes, had relatively high frequency. News shows and game shows also had relatively high frequency, and though they were lower than continuing dramas, they represent a better value. With the effect of rating held constant (i.e., for the same expenditure), news shows and game shows had higher frequencies than did continuing dramas. News shows and game shows tend to be run on a daily, instead

of weekly, basis, which may partially account for their ability to attract viewers with high frequency.

Network affiliates had the highest frequency, but they were followed closely by independent and public channels. It is likely that independents do well with daytime viewers and regular after-school viewers (two groups that are regularly available to view), while PBS tends to attract a small but loyal core of viewers. Overall, the differences in frequency across affiliations were relatively small.

The daypart with the highest frequency was prime time, but prime time is also the most expensive daypart for advertisers. For a given rating, all other dayparts are better values for building frequency. The three best dayparts for building frequency inexpensively are early fringe, morning, and daytime.

Reach. The program type that offers the best reach is continuing dramas. This is surprising, since the continuing storyline would lead one to expect them to build frequency instead. Dramas also build reach well, both when considering absolute frequency or when controlling for the effect of rating. The program types that are worst for building reach are game shows, talk shows and news shows.

Shows on network-affiliated stations build reach better than any other affiliation, even when controlling for the effect of rating. The other three affiliations, however, are not far behind the networks and the difference was not statistically significant among adults.

The best dayparts for building reach are late night and prime time. This is true in both absolute terms and when controlling for the effect of rating. The worst dayparts for building reach are morning, daytime, and early fringe. During these dayparts a small audience is regularly available, while during prime time and late night, a larger audience tunes in, but varies greatly from night to night.

Limitations. Many of the variables examined in this study are correlated, so some of the same factors may show up in different analyses. For example, game shows tend to be run during the daytime and early fringe periods, so it is hard to separate program type effects from daypart effects.

Some of the statistical tests were significant, but their magnitude was not very large. The results of this study should be replicated before the general patterns observed here are conclusively confirmed.

The time of year of data collection may also be masking or enhancing certain effects. Data were collected in April and May, well into rerun season. It is not conclusively known how reruns affect audience cumulation, but intuitively it seems they would depress frequency while building reach for some shows. Other shows, such as game shows or news, were probably only marginally affected. Another confounding factor was the NBA basketball playoffs, which occurred during the data collection period and involved the Boston Celtics. This probably disrupted viewing patterns in prime time to a small degree.

Conclusions. There are general patterns to how television audiences cumulate, and knowledge of these patterns can help the media planner achieve reach and frequency goals. The analysis here focused on cumulation trends by program type, channel affiliation, and daypart, and may seem limited to a media planner who buys time in a complex schedule across these variables. But people meter systems can monitor audience cumulation on such schedules. As people meter data become more widely available and better understood, media planners will have a powerful tool to help them achieve reach and frequency goals in media buying.

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Figure 1

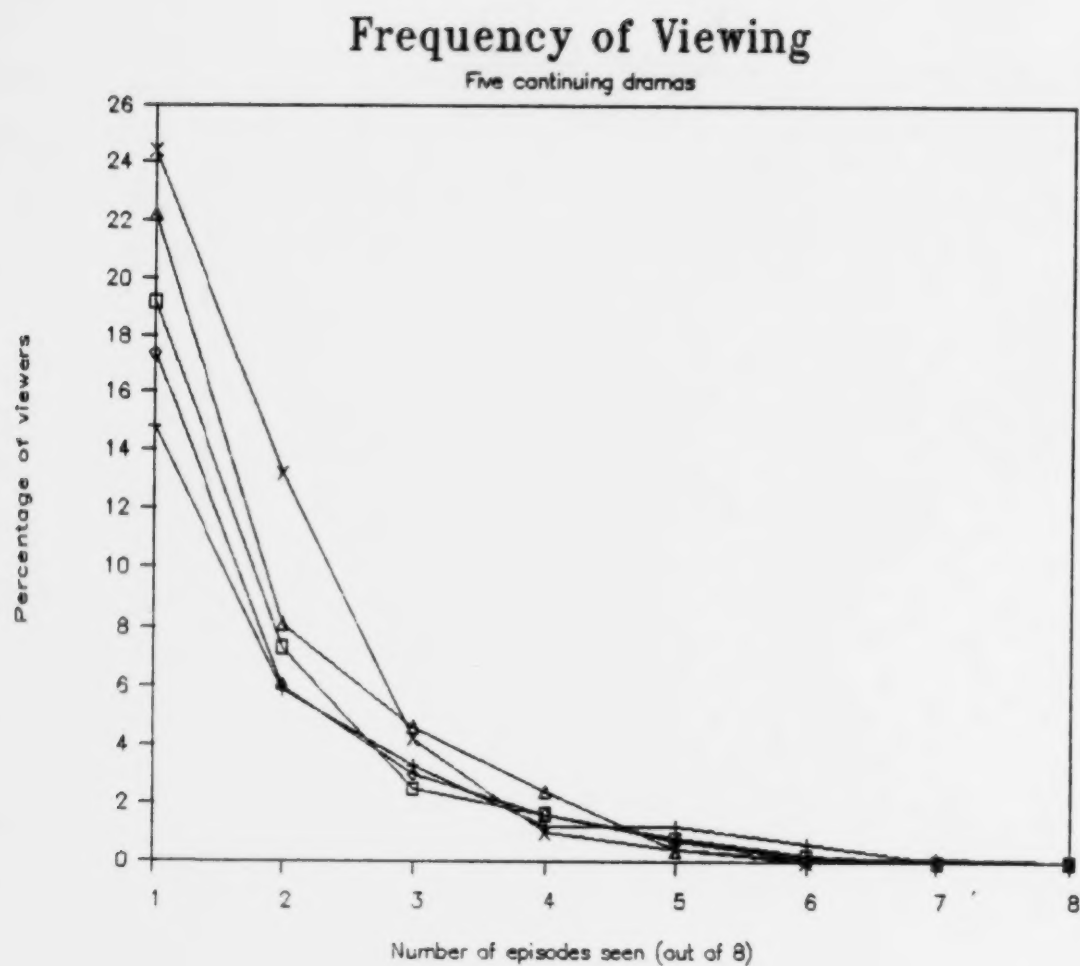


Figure 2

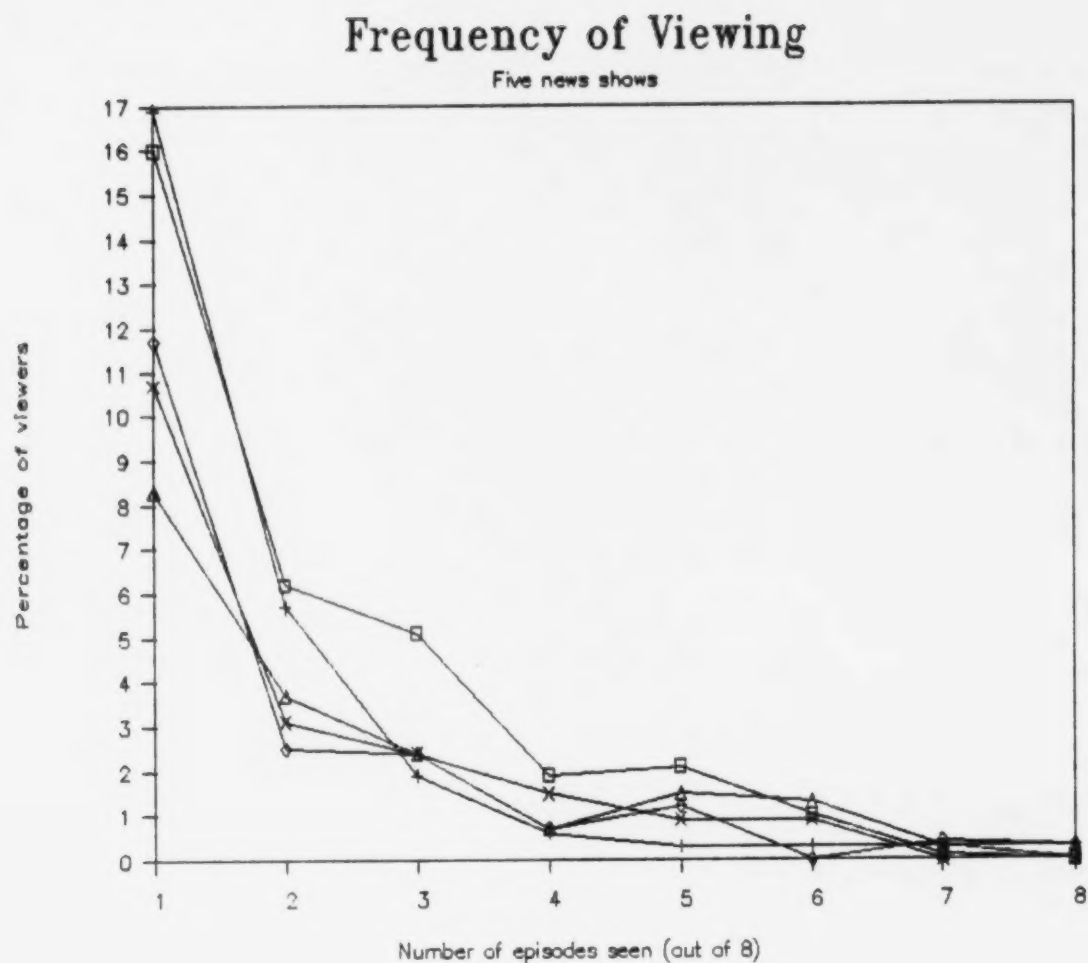


Table 1

Viewing Frequency Broken Down by Program Type:

Type (N)	Mean Viewing Frequency (out of 8)	
	raw mean	(adjusted mean)
	Adults	Households
News (22)	1.7 (1.6)	1.9 (1.9)
Game-quiz (6)	1.6 (1.8)	1.6 (1.8)
Cont Drama (7)	1.7 (1.3)	2.0 (1.6)
Non-cont Drama (14)	1.6 (1.4)	1.7 (1.6)
Sitcom (21)	1.5 (1.6)	1.7 (1.8)
Talk (4)	1.1 (1.3)	1.2 (1.4)
Children's (27)	1.2 (1.4)	1.5 (1.7)
Mean (101)	1.5	1.7
F*(6,93)	2.31	3.27
Sig.	<.05	<.01

*The effect of rating is held constant in this analysis.

Table 2

Viewing Frequency Broken Down by Affiliation:

Affiliation (N)	Mean Viewing Frequency (out of 8)	
	raw mean (adjusted mean)	
	Adults	Households
Network (57)	1.6 (1.5)	1.8 (1.6)
Independent (33)	1.4 (1.4)	1.5 (1.6)
Public (6)	1.4 (1.4)	1.6 (1.7)
Cable (8)	.6 (.6)	1.2 (1.4)
Mean (104)	1.5	1.7
$F^{*}_{3,99}$	17.71	1.39
Sig.	<.001	.25

*The effect of rating is held constant in this analysis.

Table 3

Viewing Frequency Broken Down by Daypart:

Daypart (N)	Mean Viewing Frequency (out of 8)	
	raw mean	(adjusted mean)
	Adults	Households
Morning (34)	1.3 (1.6)	1.5 (1.8)
Daytime (13)	1.4 (1.6)	1.5 (1.7)
Early Fringe (27)	1.5 (1.6)	1.8 (1.9)
Prime (26)	1.6 (1.2)	1.8 (1.4)
Late Night (4)	1.5 (1.3)	1.7 (1.6)
Mean (104)	1.5	1.7
$F_{4,98}^*$	3.40	8.70
Sig.	<.05	<.001

*The effect of rating is held constant in this analysis.

Table 4

Program Reach Broken Down by Program Type:

Type (N)	Reach Percentage (schedule = 8)	
	raw mean	(adjusted mean)
	Adults	Households
News (22)	14.0 (12.1)	24.8 (22.6)
Game-quiz (6)	5.5 (12.2)	14.4 (23.3)
Cont Drama (7)	32.0 (14.5)	51.4 (25.3)
Non-cont Drama (14)	21.8 (14.3)	34.6 (25.4)
Sitcom (21)	10.4 (13.2)	19.4 (23.7)
Talk (4)	4.3 (12.3)	10.2 (22.8)
Children's (27)	3.8 (13.2)	13.2 (24.7)
Mean (101)	12.0	22.6
$F^{*6,93}$	3.01	1.93
Sig.	<.01	.08

*The effect of rating is held constant in this analysis.

Table 5

Program Reach Broken Down by Affiliation:

Affiliation (N)	Reach Percentage (Schedule = 8)	
	raw mean	(adjusted mean)
	Adults	Households
Network (57)	18.4 (7.1)	33.0 (15.7)
Independent (33)	4.6 (6.7)	11.0 (13.6)
Public (6)	3.1 (6.7)	8.9 (13.4)
Cable (8)	.3 (5.6)	.8 (11.0)
Mean (104)	11.7	22.1
F*3,99)	.70	4.59
Sig.	.56	<.01

*The effect of rating is held constant in this analysis.

Table 6

Program Reach Broken Down by Daypart:

Daypart (N)	Reach Percentage (Schedule = 8)	
	raw mean (adjusted mean)	
	Adults	Households
Morning (34)	4.1 (11.8)	13.0 (22.9)
Daytime (13)	5.5 (11.3)	13.9 (22.2)
Early Fringe (27)	8.9 (11.2)	16.9 (20.8)
Prime (26)	26.7 (14.2)	42.3 (24.6)
Late Night (4)	17.9 (14.6)	30.6 (26.2)
Mean (104)	11.7	22.1
F*4,98)	8.88	6.14
Sig.	<.001	<.001

*The effect of rating is held constant in this analysis.

Research From Beginning to End:
Linking Local Television News Practices to the Audience
Via Information Processing Theory
A Three Station Case Study

submitted by

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Research From Beginning to End:
Linking Local Television News Practices to the Audience
Via Information Processing Theory,
A Three Station Case Study

Local news programming on television is more prevalent than ever before. Between May 1986 and May 1988, surveys by the New York-based Television Information Office show eighty-six stations increased their local evening news programming. (RTNDA, 1988, 3)

News programming is on the rise for several reasons. News gives the local station a unique presence and identity within its own market. This is important because cable television and video cassette recorders (VCRs) are competing for viewers' attention. (Webster, 1981) Secondly, news programming can be less costly to air than syndicated programming.

Another explanation for the increase in local television news programming is that it is important to the audience. For many viewers, television news is the most credible or believable source of information available to them. (Gross, 1986, 7)

In fact, just this spring a Los Angeles television station became the first in the nation to devote its prime-time programming block to locally produced news, station officials citing "plenty of information and viewers to support it." (Tyrer, 1990, 55).

Despite this tremendous growth in local television news, social scientists have lamented a lack of research activity in this area. Altheide (1976, 13) writes, ". . . network news operations are distinct from those of 'local' stations. We seem to know more about network news than local reports even though local stations put on twice as much news each day."

Certainly academic research examining local news has expanded since that statement from the 1970's. But because local news is programmed more than ever before, it is important programming in the audience's mind and it is distinctive from network news, local news is still ripe for research.

Television News Research Approaches

Two fruitful scientific approaches in the study of television news have been gatekeeping and information processing. The former examines news practices and the decision-making process. The latter attempts to explain how and how much the audience learns about their world from television news.

Gatekeeping. Participant-observation studies suggest news work is done in an organizational context. (Altheide, 1976, Tuchman, 1978, Bantz, McCorkle and Baade, 1980, Berkowitz, 1990) Many times this group context is ignored in studies which examine individual news workers. (Benjamin, 1978, Buckalew, 1969, Harless, 1974, Hewitt and Houlberg, 1981, Joseph, 1980, Smith, 1987) Others have already noted the shortcomings of such studies. (Brown, 1979, Bass, 1969) Therefore, to better understand news as an on-going process, an organizational framework is the best approach.

However, a shortfall of most gatekeeping studies is that while speculation can be made as to the effect news practices have on the audience, it remains just that, speculation. Somehow, a connection between news practices and the audience needs to be made.

Information Processing. Audience learning and recall

studies have shown that a significant amount of news information is not getting through to the audience. Various studies have shown that anywhere from fifteen to fifty-seven percent of televised stories can be remembered by the audience. (Jacoby and Hoyer, 1982, Stauffer, Frost and Rybolt, 1978, Katz, Adoni and Parness, 1977, Robinson and Levy, 1986).

There seems to be two major clusters of variables which affect audience learning from news: audience characteristics and news presentation variables. For example, the better educated seem to learn more from television news. But while journalists cannot control the characteristics of their audience, they can control the content and presentation of the newscast.

A key variable here is visual-verbal REDUNDANCY (Reese, 1983, Drew and Grimes, 1985). This means the verbal information of a story, the script, is complimented by the visual information. These stories seem to be remembered more by the audience than stories where the verbal and visual elements do not work together.

In particular stories that are complex or issue oriented, stories which can be more difficult to visually illustrate, seem to be pose more problems for audience learning and recall. (Robinson and Levy, 1986)

Gunter (1987, 49) writes, "What seems to be critically important to learning is the way visual accompaniment is used to support the spoken text of television news." Logically, when a story has visual-verbal MISMATCH, the audio and video are not in concert, then it would seem the audience would have a more difficult time understanding a story.

However, what these audience studies presume is an understanding of how the news process might impact upon audience information processing. But as Robinson and Levy (1986, 26) argue, this is not the case as they suggest ". . .it will be worthwhile to seek to develop journalistic strategies which improve the quality of. . . news coverage."

What is needed then is an clearer understanding of how the gatekeeping process contributes to newscast information processing problems, in particular visual-verbal MISMATCH. Again, this is a variable which seems to hinder audience comprehension and is within the control of broadcast journalists.

The problem then becomes one of linking new practices, in this case the treatment of visual and verbal information, to the audience through the information processing paradigm.

The Research Problem

The purpose of this paper is to begin to explore whether or not there are news practices or other factors which contribute to information processing problems, particularly the problem of visual-verbal mismatch. More specifically;

- 1) Are there observable differences in the news practices of local television stations, in particular with regard to visuals?
- 2) Are there other factors in the news process which can influence visual-verbal mismatch? Specifically, how well do television news workers understand their medium in terms of communicating with the audience based on the information processing paradigm and the problem of visual-verbal mismatch?
- 3) Are there differences in these stations' newscast visual-

verbal mismatches which are attributed to these practices and factors?

This last question examines the number of visual-verbal incidents produced by the three observed stations and the length of time of those mismatches. Theoretically, the more mismatches a station produces, the more difficult it is for the audience to comprehend that newscast and stories.

By linking news practices to the audience via information processing, this research meets a call for television news studies which are from start to finish. That is, there is a need for closure in news research which connects practices, content and the audience. (Cohen and Bantz, 1989, 142-143) This project's model and an explanation of the content analysis follows.

The Research Framework

For research questions one and two, the news process of three local television stations was examined within an organizational context using a participant-observation approach. Content analysis of all the six o'clock newscasts from each station's observation period was conducted for question three to learn if any of the stations had visual-verbal mismatch differences in their newscasts.

The Model. The News Factory served as a field guide. (Bantz, et al, 1980) Many researchers operating in the qualitative paradigm suggest a framework/model helps produce meaningful research. (Miles and Huberman, 1984) There are nine elements to the model; Story Ideation, Task Assignment, Gather and Structure Materials, Review Materials, Assemble Materials, Present

Newscast, Audience Receives Newscast, Feedback to Newswriters and Factors of Interdependence. (see Addendum 1, p. 20, also Snyder, 1989) The six journalism-specific task concepts will now be briefly discussed.

STORY IDEATION AND SELECTION is the enacting of story ideas. Various sources, such as press releases and reporter suggestions, flow into the newsroom. Story ideas are enacted collectively in daily meetings. The next step, TASK ASSIGNMENT is where the assignment editor gives crews their story(ies) for the day. Crews then move onto GATHER and STRUCTURE MATERIALS. This includes going out and shooting videotape and interviews. It can also be as simple as a producer rewriting wire copy.

After a reporter has produced a written script, the next step is REVIEW MATERIALS. Here, a news management person, for example a newscast producer, will review a script before that story enters the ASSEMBLE MATERIALS stage. This next stage has two parts to it. Stories are edited together, combining audio and visual elements, and the newscast itself is constructed by a producer. This assembly process brings together the various elements of a newscast. The final journalistic step, PRESENT NEWSCAST, is the airing of the actual newscast.

Additionally, the AUDIENCE RECEIVES the NEWSCAST. FEEDBACK to NEWSWORKERS is included to give the model closure. For this study, feedback to the newswriters were reports on the author's observations and content analysis. FACTORS OF INTERDEPENDENCE are those social factors which are often beyond journalists' control but nonetheless influence the decision making process. (Lewin, 1943)

Content Analysis. Each story with visuals from the observation period at each station was analyzed for visual-verbal mismatch. Mismatches were recorded for each incident and then timed, in seconds, for length. For example, a mismatch included a story which presented a plan for drug testing. When the plan itself was discussed, viewers saw video of the person who proposed the plan. An abstract idea, a drug testing plan, was illustrated with video that did not "match" the script, in this case the person who proposed the plan. Coder-recoder reliability for visual-verbal mismatch was ninety-seven percent.

Before the results are presented, a discussion of the field sites follows to help the reader gain a better understanding of this project.

Field Sites

Three local television news operations were observed during November and December of 1988. Field sites were carefully selected so they reflected a range based on market size. It is generally given that as market size increases, so does the amount of revenue a station produces. In turn, larger market stations can afford larger and more experienced staffs. (Stone, 1989, 43)

Field sites are in the same mid-west state. The first station observed, WSSS, is the small market station with a Nielsen market rank of under 100. The second station observed, WLLL, is the large market station and is in a Nielsen top-50 market. The final station observed, WMMM is the medium market station with a Nielsen rank between 51 and 100.

All three stations are network affiliates. They fit a fairly

typical pattern in that the reporters and photographers at WSSS are on their first job in television news. Most of the staff at WLLL has five or more years of news experience, making it the most experienced station observed while WMMM falls into the middle. The process behind each station's six o'clock newscast was observed.

In addition to carefully selecting field sites, membership checks (feedback) were submitted back to each of the stations. The membership check increases both the reliability and validity of qualitative research (Miles and Huberman, 1984, 242-243) Follow-up interviews to validate the membership checks were conducted in May, 1989. Anonymity was promised to ensure newsworker cooperation.

The results of the study follows.

Results

Research question one: Are there observable differences in the news practices of local television stations, in particular with regard to the treatment visuals?

The context for this question is the six journalism-related steps in the News Factory. Each task are examined based on how visuals receive treatment as this is a key variable for audience information processing.

STORY IDEATION AND SELECTION. How to visually illustrate stories is generally not a concern here. Deciding what to cover and how to fill the newscast with is the primary focus of these meetings. A common question heard at the start of these daily meetings is "What have we got goin' today?" If visuals are mentioned, it is because a story is "good" visually. This finding supports other research. (Berkowitz, 1990, 66)

These meetings are generally conducted by management; producers, assignment editor, news director, etc. Not once did a reporter participate in these meetings. WSSS does not conduct any story meetings as the producers do not report to work until 2:00 PM. The assignment editor at WSSS is generally on his own for generating story ideas.

TASK ASSIGNMENT. At WLLL, visual treatment receives more attention in this stage than either WMMM or WSSS. That's because the managing editor at WLLL will spell out the assignment to his reporters, including offering suggestions for visual treatment.

The assignment editors at WMMM and WSSS give reporters their assignments. At WMMM, the assignment editor will discuss the story angle and who to contact for interviews but visual suggestions are almost non-existent. At WSSS, the assignment editor sometimes provides reporters with a story background sheet. He may include visual suggestions on this sheet, but only when he has time. Reporters at WMMM and WSSS are more often than not left on their own for determining visual treatment.

GATHER AND STRUCTURE MATERIALS. Whether or not reporters receive input on visual treatment, reporters will have the primary responsibility for the visual treatment of most of their stories. One main exception is breaking stories where reporters have to rely on what visuals their photographers can give them.

Because reporters have the primary responsible for visuals, the step of Gather and Structure Materials takes on added importance. This became evident during the field observations. Two examples will be used to illustrate how the role of the

reporter in determining visuals is critical to whether or not a story has visual-verbal mismatch problems. Both of these observations happen to be from WMMM.

The first observed example produced a story that worked well visually. The story was about whether or not churches should be the location of public voting polls. After receiving the story and no visual input from the assignment editor, the reporter made some phone calls to get background information and a comment from the group opposing the use of churches as polling places. This contact person was located in the state capital, an on-camera interview would be impossible.

On the way to the first shoot location, the reporter laid out the entire story for his photographer. What follows are some excerpts from this tape-recorded conversation.

Reporter: They store the voting machines right there on (church) school property.

Photo: So you gonna have a shot of that?

Reporter: Yeah, we'll see if we can get her to open up the doors (of the machine) and get a shot of that. . . . I'm gonna start off the package with some voting video (from the fall election). . . . And we're gonna drive around and get pictures of these (voting) places and I'm gonna have them freeze-frame them downstairs. . . and we'll in between them and come right out to the city clerk. . . . Out of the city clerk I'm gonna have you take a picture of a steeple. . . that I can (superimpose) a quote from the (opposition). . . then I'll go into the church school, talk to the principal there. . . . Basically a pretty straightforward story.

By understanding the story, this reporter used the available visual tools--file video, fresh video, graphics and a full-screen caption to construct a story that upon further analysis worked very well in terms of the visuals and narration complementing one another.

The other example is similar to the one just presented in that this story was also issue-oriented. This second example was about a new federal law involving underground gasoline storage tanks. This story was covered by a different reporter but also the same photographer as in the first example.

On the way to the first shoot location, it became clear to the author that this reporter did not have a handle on how she was going to present the story visually. She knew who to talk to but not what visuals she wanted to help tell the story.

At the three different shoot locations, the photographer constantly had to ask what visuals were needed. For example, after the first interview concluded the photographer asked the reporter, "Want me to get a shot of the station or something?" The reporter asked the interviewee where their gas pump was. The photographer inquired, "Want me to get a shot of that?" The reporter said "Yeah." Throughout the rest of the field shooting, the photographer asked what video was needed as the reporter did not say what was needed.

Needless to say, this reporter produced a story that was a mess visually. For one thing, there was not any video of underground storage tanks. This reporter also had a very difficult time editing this story. That should not have come as a surprise given how well this reporter had a handle on the story entering the field.

Because reporters have responsibility for story visuals, they need to understand the story and what visuals are needed to produce a story which theoretically the audience should understand.

REVIEW MATERIALS. Based on the literature review and the author's own five-year experience in local television news, reviewing scripts before stories are even edited together was thought to be an almost nonexistent practice. (Becker, 1982, Bantz, 1980) In fact, the first station observed, WSSS does not review scripts.

But WLLL and WMMM review every story script whenever possible. The managing editor at WLLL handles script reviewing. He said he looks for clarity, accuracy, potential legal problems and also discusses the visual treatment of the story with the reporter. He said it was very important for stories to be both clearly written and visually illustrated in order for the audience to understand the story. He, in fact, fulfills the role of "comprehension editor." (Robinson and Levy, 1986, p. 220)

WMMM newscast producers review scripts. Interestingly, WMMM had just started this practice under a new news director. The six o'clock producer said he was still learning what to look for but did concentrate on writing. The author did not observe any visual suggestions taking place but the producer did say he also discussed visuals with reporters.

The author distinguishes between stations which do and do not review scripts. Stations which consistently review scripts are labeled as "producer-driven" News Factories. Stations which do not execute this practice are called "reporter-driven" News Factories.

ASSEMBLE MATERIALS. Visually, the critical task in this stage is the actual editing of videotape and scripted narration

into one package. At WSSS, photographers do all the editing, at WMMM reporters edit their own stories and at WLLL tape editors handle this task. Photographers and tape editors basically execute the reporter's wishes as the following conversation between a reporter and tape editor at WLLL will demonstrate.

Reporter: I thought we'd use one shot. . .of the leaflet to begin with, ok?

Tape Editor: (Nods head)

Reporter: (Referring to script) Here you can use a shot of students walking around. . .use some rally video here. . . .

Tape Editor: That's the file video. (makes note on script)

Reporter: You can use more student video here. And these are the sound bites. It's mostly sound bites.

This demonstrates that use of visuals is primarily a reporter-driven process. However, the senior tape editor at WLLL said he can often provide a different perspective into the use of video and will often make his own decisions on what shots to use.

PRESENT NEWSCAST. Because television newscasts are done live, technical glitches and other foul-ups are difficult to correct. Obviously such mistakes can hinder audience learning. But the execution of a newscast is so routine that very few such mistakes were observed at any of the stations.

In summary, there are differences in the news factory process at local television stations and the attention visuals receive. Differences can be either individual or organizational. Organizationally, reporters at WLLL receive more visual input into their stories because of the attention of the managing editor. Reporters at WSSS are almost left on their own when it

comes to visuals. Common to all three stations, reporters have the primary visual input into a story no matter who edits the final piece together.

Individually, the most noticeable difference is how well reporters understand a story going into the field and the visuals needed to tell that story. If a reporter was ill-prepared, the story was probably going to have problems with visual-verbal mismatching. Again, this is crucial as reporters have the primary responsibility for the visuals in their stories.

Research question two: Are there other factors which contribute to the problem of visual-verbal mismatch? Specifically, how well do newswriters understand their own medium in terms of communicating with the audience based on the information processing paradigm and the problem of visual-verbal mismatch?

Information processing research suggests an important skill is writing to video and telling stories visually. Based upon interviews, conversations, and field observations, workers at WSSS need to develop this skill more and even become conscious of the need to produce stories where the video and narration work together. More often than not, newswriters at WSSS felt viewers could "get the point" of a story even if the video and narration did not match. This contradicts information processing findings.

However, newswriters at WMMM and WLLL noted that writing to video was very important in terms of telling a story to a mass audience. Newswriters at WMMM and WLLL are not only more experienced than their counterparts at WSSS but they also work in an environment which encourages working with visuals, especially

at WLLL. Here the managing editor works with reporters before they leave the station and also reviews scripts and works with reporters before stories are assembled into their final form.

This field work tentatively suggests newswriters are learning this skill through work experience and not necessarily through formal schooling. For example, the reporter in the first story example said he worked with graduate students on his first job (ironically at WSSS) and they taught him about the need to tell a story where the visual and verbal components worked together.

Now that the model has been analyzed, the next step is to attempt to determine whether or not those practices and factors make a difference in the newscast in terms of visual-verbal mismatches present in the newscast. Logically, a station more conscious of visual treatment should produce fewer mismatches than a station which does not give as much attention to visuals.

Research question three: Are there differences in these stations newscast visual-verbal mismatches which could be attributed to those practices?

Tables 1 and 2 report the content analysis of each station's visual-verbal mismatches. Table 1 reports visual-verbal mismatches in terms of incidents and Table 2 reports differences in the length of time of those incidents.

TABLE 1

Chi-Square Test of Proportions on
Visual-Verbal Incidents by Station

	Number of Incidents
WSSS	82
WMMM	76
WLLL	83

The calculated chi-square value of 5.24 is less than the value needed (5.99), the author fails to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore there is no significant difference between stations on the number of visual-verbal mismatches.

TABLE 2

Proportion of Visual-Verbal Mismatch Length
in Stories With Visuals by Station

	Total Time of Visual Stories (seconds)	Total V-VM (seconds)	Percent Mismatched
WSSS	2531	648	26 percent
WMMM	2662	525	20 percent
WLLL	3088	504	16 percent

The reported chi-square on the visual-verbal mismatch figures is 93.6 which is greater than the value needed (5.99). Thus there is a significant difference in the length of visual-verbal mismatches per station. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Theoretically, the audience for WSSS during the week of

November 28-December 2, 1988, could have had a problem processing one-quarter of WSSS's stories. On the other hand, WLLL's audience during the week of December 5 through December 9 could have had a problem with approximately one-sixth of the stories with visuals.

Surprisingly, given the attention WLLL gives to visuals it was somewhat of a shock to learn that there was not a difference between the stations in the number of visual-verbal mismatches each station produced.

However, the differences in length suggest that newswriters at WMMM and WLLL are attempting to keep their mismatches as short as they can. For example, the managing editor at WLLL said it is impossible to eliminate all visual problems. Time constraints and deadlines have to met. He said it was better for a story to air with some visual problems than not to air the story at all.

Given that the table figures are not from a random sample, it could very well be that these numbers are based on chance. But because the field work and interviews suggest that WMMM and WLLL are more "visually conscious," differences in the figures were expected. Theoretically, WMMM and WLLL should be communicating more efficiently and effectively with their audiences than WSSS.

SUMMARY and INTERPRETATION

Through this triangulation of methods, combining qualitative and quantitative research, an argument is made for the idea that news practices and factors can make a difference in information processing content variables.

These practices and factors include input from management which in turn can contribute to how well prepared a reporter is going into the field, reviewing scripts, and newswriters understanding both their stories and the importance of writing to video. The two producer-driven newsrooms had fewer visual-verbal mismatch problems than the reporter-driven station. The staffs at the two producer-driven stations have more news experience and, through experience, understand the importance of telling stories visually.

Implications of Research Findings

Certainly this information can be useful to both broadcast journalists and journalism educators.

For example, stations should consider the practices of reviewing scripts and management working more closely with reporters on stories. However, during the follow-up interviews after the membership checks were submitted, the news director at WSSS said he would love to review scripts but simply "didn't have the horses" to do so.

His producers anchor the news, the assignment editor spends his afternoons lining up the next day's reports and the news director is tied up with the problems of managing a small-market newsroom. This suggests that what makes the best theoretical practices might not work realistically.

However, experience need not be a factor in understanding the need for writing to video. Beginning journalists can bring this knowledge to the job. This is important as they may not receive the help they need in developing this skill.

Admittedly, this project is not quite at the point of closure.

Audience measurement to learn if the mismatch figures made a difference in learning and recall was not conducted. Others have already noted the constraint of resources for doing such research. (Cohen and Bantz, 1989)

However, the News Factory model holds the potential for conducting "start to finish" research. For example, while observing the news process, audience measurement based on the information processing paradigm can be conducted. Content analysis of stories for information processing problems can be done. Then, the process behind stories which are and are not understood are examined for potential relationships.

For example, are producer-driven News Factories communicating with their audience more consistently and efficiently than reporter-driven News Factories? Are stations with more visual-verbal mismatches communicating less effectively with their audience? In other words, do some news practices really make a difference in audience learning and recall? That final question has yet to be completely addressed but the model now exists for conducting such research.

Why should journalists take an interest in the learning barriers they are producing for their audience? Since one of the goals of journalism is to inform, audience studies in this area demonstrate television news can do a better job of communicating. The first step for researchers is to demonstrate that certain news practices do make a difference in reaching an audience effectively. The next step is convincing journalists that they should adopt these practices.

Addendum 1

News Factory Model

Factors of
Interdependence
which interweave
throughout the
process

Raw News
[Input]

Market Size

Step 1 Story Ideation & Selection

News Director
Philosophy

Step 2 Task Assignment

Consultants

Impartial
Rules

Step 3 Gather & Structure
Materials

Budget

Non-news
Programming

Step 4 Review Materials
(producer driven)

News Staff Size

Competitive
Factors

Step 5 Assemble Materials
(remains step 4 if
reporter driven)

Other
Communication
Technologies

News Worker
Experience

Step 6 Present Newscast
[Output]

Station
Unions

Step 7 Audience
Receives Newscast

Step 8 Feedback to
Newsworkers
(May be through ratings, letters or
membership check)

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INVOLVEMENT AND MEDIUM IN NEWS INFORMATION PROCESSING

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INVOLVEMENT AND MEDIUM IN NEWS INFORMATION PROCESSING

ABSTRACT

An experiment was conducted to assess the relationship between *emotional* and *cognitive* involvement and medium. It was hypothesized that television would do a better job at conveying information if the information was emotionally involving. It was also hypothesized that newspapers would do a better job at conveying information that was cognitively involving.

A three-factor experimental design was employed to test the hypotheses: 2 involvement (emotional or cognitive) by 2 message consistency (consistent or inconsistent) by 2 medium (television and newspapers). The results suggested that people remembered more from television for news stories that were emotionally involving. In addition, people recalled facts most accurately when the information was delivered by television and the story was involving. However, people recalled more facts from newspapers when the stories were cognitively involving. The article recommends that future research should investigate the effect of recall over varying time periods to assess the relative potency of these two media.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INVOLVEMENT AND MEDIUM IN NEWS INFORMATION PROCESSING

INTRODUCTION

Television news has been characterized as everything from frivolous fluff to a means of metaphorically stepping into other worlds. It has been described as useless "happy talk" by some. Others see it as the most important communication advance since Gutenberg developed movable type in the 1450's. While these debates on the relative merits of television will rage on in journalism schools, in scholarly journals and in the popular press, one fact is clear--most people *believe* they get most of their news from television (Roper, 1985, 1987).

The abundance of television news to which Americans are exposed may play a role in the perception that they are getting most of their news from television. But as Levy and Robinson (1986, p. 232) have argued, "TV news viewers emerged as less well-informed than non-viewers, and that seems particularly true among those who claim that TV is their main source of news." They suggest that media messages and interpersonal forms of communication work together to inform and educate, and that it is pointless to look for the medium that does the best job. "The more relevant question, then, is how might all the news media--especially TV--be improved to take advantage of these media interdependencies?" (Robinson and Levy, 1986, p. 234).

One way of addressing that question is to find out whether certain types of news are best suited for television. This paper will endeavor to do that by attempting to determine whether *emotionally involving* stories stimulate a different kind of information processing than *cognitively involving* stories in different media. It will investigate recall and accuracy of recall for news

presented in two media--*television* and *newspapers*. And, it will attempt to determine whether medium acts as an intervening variable in the processing of cognitively and involving news stories.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Involvement

Suppose someone attempts to make the case during a dinner party that "hijacking of airplanes is good because it promotes social awareness of important international issues." Undoubtedly, the reaction from the other diners would range from mild annoyance to outrage. Sherif and Cantril (1947) would argue that the reaction was related to "ego-involvement" because universally accepted central values had been attacked. The ego-involvement here, would be the idea that "I am a member of a civilized society--neither the society nor I condone hijacking and endangerment of innocent people." This idea was later advanced by Sherif and Hovland (1961) who argued that members of groups that reinforce particular stands on an issue tend to have high ego-involvement with the issue.

Since the 1960's, the involvement concept has taken on different shades of meaning. Unlike the Sherif conceptualization, Krugman (1965, 1966) used the term in connection with medium. He argued that the print media are more involving than the broadcast media because reading requires more effort than viewing. Later, Ray (1973) argued that social scientists should consider three components of involvement--the cognitive component which contains elements such as attention and learning, the affective component which contain emotions and attitudes, and the connative components which refers to the changes in behavior or intent. People are believed to pay closer attention to

a message when they think it is personally relevant or involving (Greenwald and Leavitt, 1984). The term also has been used to characterize how strongly a stimulus is linked to important values (Sherif and Cantril, 1947; Ostrom and Brock, 1968) or the level of arousal (Mitchell, 1981).

Recently, the involvement concept has been used by communication scholars to express the amount of participation an individual exerts in processing media messages (Levy & Windahl, 1985). Perse (1989, pg. 18) explained it this way:

Personal participation (involvement) in the communication process is evidenced cognitively, in information processing and affectively, in emotional reactions to the message. When people are involved, they pay attention to the message, process the information and respond emotionally. Involvement is revealed in thoughts and feelings. The two types of involvement during media exposure, then, are cognitive and emotional.

Cognitive Involvement

Cognitive news processing is associated with the nature of intelligence, the thought process and how media users think about and use news (Reeves, 1989). A useful framework for considering cognitive involvement comes from social psychology under the rubric of *schema theory*.¹ A schema is a cognitive structure that "represents organized knowledge about a given concept or type of stimulus" abstracted from prior knowledge (Fiske and Taylor, 1984, p. 140).² People attempt to assimilate new facts into an existing schema when confronted with new information (Piaget, 1970). Assimilation refers to the process of searching for a schema that will aid in interpreting new information. If the process is successful, the existing schema will be strengthened by the additional information. When an appropriate schema cannot

be found, a person must accommodate. This means a person will either attempt to establish a new schema or give up any attempt to cope with the new information.

A considerable amount of social cognition literature suggests that people tend to recall information that is consistent with a schema because it has been assimilated into the schema (Fiske, Kinder and Larter, 1983). Hastie (1981) suggests that inconsistency stimulates additional attention to the information at input, but in time people will reconcile these inconsistencies. A person may, for example, recall that a hijacker of an aircraft was Lebanese because it was consistent with an established schema for hijackings. However, the same person, when told that the hijacker was Danish, might also recall that bit of information because it was inconsistent with an established schema. Wicks and Drew (1989) found that people provided with inconsistent information about a news story that had received considerable media attention recalled more facts than people provided with consistent information. However, people provided with consistent information inferred more than those who had received inconsistent information.

Greenwald and Leavitt (1984) suggest that cognitive involvement is made up of attention, recognition and elaboration. Schemata, then would seem to be a critical component of cognitive involvement. People would attend to, recognize and attempt to elaborate on new information when they have a complex schema upon which to draw. Conversely, they may ignore and fail to recognize and ultimately elaborate upon information for which an appropriate schema cannot be found.

Emotional Involvement

By contrast, emotional involvement may be viewed as that which produces physiological responses to media information. People go to movies to laugh, cry and get scared. As Zillman (1985) has noted, people go out of their way to expose themselves to media fare that will arouse emotions. Lemish (1985) reported that people demonstrate reactions to soap operas ranging from cheers to disgust.

Emotional involvement then is related to salience of an issue rather than an individual's interest in an issue (Perse, 1989). Several studies have manipulated involvement experimentally by presenting an individual with a topic of personal relevance or importance (Apsler and Sears, 1968; Cacioppo and Petty, 1979; Eagly and Manis, 1966; Petty and Cacioppo, 1981; Petty, Cacioppo and Goldman, 1981; Rhine and Severance, 1970; Wright, 1973, 1974).

The hijack example described earlier may help clarify the distinction between emotional and cognitive involvement. If a son or daughter is aboard the hijacked flight, emotional involvement may supersede cognitive involvement. Emotions such as fear, anger and feelings of helplessness would undoubtedly stimulate media usage in the hope of altering one's emotional state. This would be accomplished by learning that all of the hostages have been released and are safe.

However, the professor of international relations may remain emotionally detached from the event but still be very involved. This individual may devote considerable attention to the events of the hijacking as they unfold. This attention may take the form of looking for similarities and differences between this event and other similar types of events from the past. Hence, cognitive involvement may play a dominant role in information processing for this individual.

Medium

Recent research suggests that Americans believe that television is their dominant source for information about the world around them (Roper, 1985). But studies over the past three decades have suggested the contrary (Wade and Schramm, 1969; Edelstein, 1974). And others have suggested that television news is a very poor teacher when compared to newspapers (Clarke and Fredin, 1978; Becker and Whitney, 1980; Robinson, 1967). Browne (1978) found that people presented with a text of information on the legislative process demonstrated better recall of facts than individuals presented with a broadcast documentary version. Robinson and Levy (1986) suggest that people may grossly underestimate learning from print as well as interpersonal sources versus television.

Building upon earlier work, Berry (1983) reported that free recall of news topics following a newscast is poor. However, the likelihood of and extent of recall varies greatly among various news stories and among viewers. Stauffer, Frost and Rybolt (1981) found that people recall television and newspaper stories about equally but they remember far less from radio. Edwardson, Grooms and Proudlove (1981) reported that interesting video facilitates learning even when the video failed to convey the facts in the story. And, Katz, Adoni and Parness (1977) report that visualization facilitates recall of some news items in their study involving a comparison between audio alone and audio and video.

Gunter, Berry and Clifford (1982) suggest that learning and retention of television news depends vitally on "the way information is structured and presented in bulletins." Television news stories are transitory and cannot be

reread. Learning content must occur quickly and powerful combinations of complex visual and auditory stimuli must be decoded (Robinson and Levy, 1986).

Television may require considerably more cognitive processing effort than newspaper stories. This effort may prompt people to systematically ignore television stories unless they promise tangible gratifications (Palmgreen and Rayburn, 1985). Hence, a story that is perceived as personally irrelevant or unimportant may be tuned out. By contrast, a newspaper story affords one the opportunity to process at one's own pace or to reread certain passages. In addition, interest in a story may develop as one takes in new information at one's own pace.

McClure and Patterson (1976) reported that newspapers have a more powerful agenda-setting effect than television because newspapers can better demonstrate significance by placement, visuals and headlines. But they added that television did have an effect on story salience under certain conditions, particularly when direct and relevant visual conditions can be presented such as the Vietnam War and Watergate. Cohen, Wigand and Harrison (1976) reported that seventh graders were better able to recall more emotion-arousing television news stories than neutral stories. Neuman (1976) reported that educational level appears to affect recall among viewers.

SUMMARY

As numerous scholars of communication have discovered, television is comparatively weak at conveying certain types of information when compared to newspapers. However, it is important to note that the topics investigated pertain generally to abstract public policy issues or philosophical orientation. For example, Robinson (1967) studied the political orientation

of governments in foreign countries, Clarke and Fredin (1978), looked at learning associated with U.S. Senate candidates, Becker and Whitney (1980) studied issues such as a solution for disposal of city waste and Kennamer (1983) looked at learning about the Reagan economic policies.

While each of these themes may well be cognitively involving, none would appear to be very emotionally involving. None would produce the outrage generated by news of the assassination of students in Tiannenman Square. None would produce the feelings of joy as the Berlin Wall was dismantled by East and West Germans, nor would they produce fear experienced by parents when they learn that crack cocaine is sold openly in the local high school. In other words, some stories are emotionally involving because their salience is related to the personal relevance of the issue. Perhaps the stories dealing with political issues and the like are not directly or immediately personally relevant--at least in an emotional sense. These might be best characterized as cognitively involving because their salience is related to the acquisition of new knowledge about a topic of interest rather than as a function of fear, anger, etc.

HYPOTHESES

The literature generally supports the proposition that people recall and ultimately learn more from newspapers even though they may believe that television is their main source of news (Robinson and Levy, 1986). However, as McClure and Patterson (1976) and others have found, television is capable of affecting story salience when direct and relevant (emotionally involving) information was presented. This premise is supported by Cohen, Wigand and

Harrison (1976) who suggest that children remember emotion-arousing news stories better than neutral stories. If this is the case, television may clearly play a powerful mitigating role in driving information processing.

This literature suggest the first set of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1

People *recall more facts* from television news stories than from equivalent newspaper stories when the stories to which the viewer is exposed are emotionally involving.

Hypothesis 2

People *recall facts more accurately* from television news stories than from equivalent newspaper stories when these stories are emotionally involving to the viewer.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 address the flip side of the coin--the proposition that people generally get more out of newspaper stories when the stories presented are cognitively involving.

Hypothesis 3

People *recall more facts* from newspaper stories than from equivalent television news stories when the stories to which the viewer is exposed are cognitively involving.

Hypothesis 4

People *recall facts more accurately* from newspaper stories than from equivalent television news stories when the stories to which the viewer is exposed are cognitively involving.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The study was conducted at a Midwestern university in May of 1989. Undergraduate students were randomly assigned to one of six possible conditions. A total of 120 subjects participated in the experiment. The cells ranged in size from 19 to 21 students each; the sample was drawn from several large journalism and advertising classes. The classes contained a mix of majors from disciplines across the university and the students received extra credit for participating in the experiment.

Experimental Overview

A three-factor experimental design was employed (Campbell and Stanley, 1963): 2 involvement (cognitive or emotional) X 2 message consistency (consistent or inconsistent) X 2 medium (television and newspapers). The design required a two-part testing session.

The first part of the experiment was intended to provide baseline knowledge about two topics. These initial stories would ultimately interface with a second set of stories. The second set of stories would either add additional consistent information or information that was not consistent with the initial set of stories. This consistency manipulation was included to address the question of cognitive processing. Specifically, individuals receiving inconsistent sets of information should recall inconsistencies contained in the stories. This is because thinking about inconsistencies should cause these facts to obtrude and ultimately produce recall--at least in the short term. However, those reading sets of consistent information should

recall that information that reinforced by the second story (Fiske, Kinder & Larter, 1983; Wicks & Drew, 1989).

Students in the consistent and inconsistent conditions read an emotionally involving story. The story relayed the potential for eye injuries associated with being in the sun. They also read a cognitively involving story. This story dealt with the alteration of Yellowstone National Park as a result of the fires of 1988. A third story about economics was inserted between the two experimental stories to serve as a buffer.

This second set of stories would be varied exclusively by medium--either television or newspaper. The information contained in the second set of stories was identical across subjects except that half read newspaper stories and the other half saw television stories. Hence, message consistency and medium were between subject factors and type of involvement was a within-subject factor.

Independent Variables: Stimulus Materials

Emotional Involvement

The first set of news stories was professionally typeset and each given an appropriate headline. The news item concerning sun-related injuries to the eyes was the emotionally involving story. This topic was selected because the sun is virtually unavoidable. This, coupled with the fact, that it is capable of doing personal harm, seemed to make it ideal for the purpose of the experiment. Pretests followed by focused discussion of the stimulus materials with the subjects confirmed that the story had an emotional impact. Many of the subjects said that the story had elicited fear, and that they would take extra precautions in the future.

Cognitive Involvement

The story about the fires at Yellowstone was designated as the cognitively involving news. Subjects interviewed after a pretest commented that it is important for people to keep up on environmental matters. Others said that they found the stories interesting and that they had learned something. In no case did a subject indicate that the story had elicited anger, sadness, fear or any other strong emotion--the story was most often characterized as "important and interesting" or one that "made me think."

The control group did not read stories about the sun, forest fires nor the economy. Instead, they read filler copy dealing with socio-economic changes in China,³ an FBI investigation into questionable professional sports ticket practices in Boston, and an account of the issues surrounding testing for drugs in the workplace.

Message Consistency of Schema Invoking Stories

Consistency and discrepancy was manipulated by altering the initial set of stories about the sun and the Yellowstone fires. Those in the consistent condition read that ultraviolet rays had the potential of causing permanent eye damage and that precautionary measures to protect the eyes should be made by wearing quality sunglasses. This was reiterated in the second story. The fire story suggested that natural forest fires are useful since they are part of the natural life cycle of the forest. It indicated that fires at Yellowstone had cleansed the environment leading to a rebirth. This, too, was reiterated in the second story.

Those in the inconsistent condition read that the real danger from the sun came not from UV rays but from overexposure to blue light. It suggested that caution should always be taken to prevent eye damage from the sun, but

that recent studies indicate that dangerous UV rays rarely cause eye injuries. The second story suggested that the Yellowstone let-it-burn policy had been an ecological disaster and that it would take decades or longer for the park to recover.

These stories to which the consistent and inconsistent subjects had been exposed were selected from newspapers and magazines and edited for the purpose of the experiment. The facts in all of the stories were accurate. Differences between the consistent and inconsistent information were a function of differing perspectives of the writers or by isolating certain portions of the articles. For example, the stories concerning danger from the sun came from different parts of the same *Consumer Reports* article in which different evidence was presented. And the Yellowstone stories appeared in different issues of the *Chicago Tribune*.

Medium Manipulation

The second phase of the study involved exposing subjects to either four television or newspaper stories. The second set of stories was virtually identical in content across all subjects--only medium was varied. Two of the stories in the second phase were unrelated to the initial set of stories read by the students. They were included to more closely simulate the acts of viewing a television newscast or reading a newspaper.

The stories were selected from several weeks of network newscasts recorded by individuals who had worked professionally as broadcast news reporters and managers. They looked for stories that they believed to be clear, cogent and offering congruence between audio and video.

The newspaper story was produced by transcribing the original television script. Minor modifications were made to conform to the conventional print newspaper style. These adjustments were purely stylistic--they did not alter

the number of facts nor the ordering of facts contained in the story. The newspaper versions were professionally typeset to create the appearance they were clipped from the newspaper.

Dependent Variables

The first measure taken was unaided recall (Fiske, Kinder and Larter, 1983; Graber, 1988 and Lau, 1986). Students were asked to recall facts from all of the stories. A pre-test had suggested that most students could finish the task in 15 minutes.⁴

The second measure taken was aided recall. Facts were taken verbatim from the second set of news stories that all of the students had read or seen. An anchored nine-point scale was employed with values ranging from (1) Strongly Agree to (9) Strongly Disagree. A pretest indicated that the task could be completed in four minutes.⁵ The following represents a sample of the items included:

Yellowstone National Park will be a healthier place
as a result of the fires last summer.

Sunlight reflecting off sand at the beach can
intensify UV rays which may cause permanent
blindness.

RESULTS

The initial results were based on six cells--four experimental treatments and two control groups. The control groups were included to ascertain that differences in amount and accuracy of recall were a function of the experimental treatment. Subjects in the six cells recalled an average of 26 facts. ANOVA produced non-significant differences for total

all between any of the six cells. This suggests that the material for each group stimulated approximately equal recall among the group members. If one group had recalled considerably more or less than another group, it is possible that recall variance may have been an artifact of stories selected. The recall invariance between the three groups thus suggests that the information created approximately equivalent memory trace across the cells. As would be expected, the control group recalled fewer facts from the experimental stories because they had read only a single story rather than two stories on these topics.

As such, the control group was eliminated from further analysis resulting in a 2 (medium) X 2 (information consistency) X 2 (involvement) factorial design. Elimination of the control group permitted a direct comparison between the experimental groups--those which had received a second set of news items related to the schema invoking knowledge set.

Emotionally Involving Information

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis suggested that people will remember more from a television news story than from an equivalent newspaper story if the information is emotionally involving. Unaided recall examinations were used to test this hypothesis.

Facts from the second set of stories dealing specifically with danger from the sun (the emotionally involving story) were counted. ANOVA produced a significant difference based on medium $F(1,81)=18.94$ $p<.000$. Those who had read either of the first set of sun-related stories, followed by the task of viewing a television story about the sun recalled considerably more from the television story ($x = 4.9$) than those students who had read an

equivalent story in newspaper form ($x = 2.9$). This finding suggests that the television medium acted as a powerful variable when the message contained warning information that may have produced fear.

It is also important to note that recall of total facts (those from both stories) relating to the sun failed to produce significant results. Those who had read a story about the sun followed by watching a news story recalled 8.2 facts while those who read two news stories about the sun recalled an average of 8.3 facts. In other words, each group remembered about the same number of facts from the two stories about the sun. However, the group that first read a newspaper story and then viewed a TV story recalled the most from the television story. Those who read two stories recalled more facts from the first story.

The story about the sun failed to produce any significant results among members of the consistent or inconsistent conditions--at least in terms of number of facts recalled. Those who received discrepant information sets recalled somewhat more facts from the second story ($x = 4.3$) than did those who received consistent information ($x = 3.7$) but ANOVA failed to produce significant results. The implication was that the fact that the sun could cause bodily harm overpowered the effects of message consistency.

Collectively, the results support hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis suggested that people *recall facts more accurately* from television news stories than from equivalent newspaper stories when these stories are emotionally involving to the viewer. Aided recall examinations were used to test this hypothesis. ANOVA produced significant results for five of the seven items (See Table 1).⁶

TABLE 1

<u>Facts</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Sig. of F</u>
Item 1	1	2.75	.101
Item 2	1	5.52	.021 *
Item 3	1	9.73	.003 **
Item 4	1	1.65	.203
Item 5	1	6.44	.013 *
Item 6	1	5.85	.018 *
Item 7	1	14.97	.000 ***

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

For each of the seven items drawn from the second story, individuals who had viewed the television news account (as opposed to having read an identical account) responded most accurately. For the two statements that failed to produce significant results, the direction was as predicted.

Hence, support is provided for the second hypothesis.

Cognitively Involving Information

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis suggested that people *recall more facts* from newspaper stories than from equivalent television news stories when the stories to which the viewer is exposed are cognitively involving. Unaided recall was used to test this hypothesis.

Facts from the second set of stories dealing specifically with the rebirth of Yellowstone (the cognitively involving story) were counted. Those who had read either of the first set of Yellowstone-related stories followed by a newspaper story about Yellowstone recalled more from the newspaper story ($x = 5.2$) than those students who had seen an identical story in television form ($x = 4.6$). While in the predicted direction, the results are not significant.

Turning now to total recall of facts, a strikingly different picture emerges. Those who had read two news stories recalled an average of 8.4 facts while those who had read one story and viewed one story recalled only 5.9 facts. ANOVA produced a significant difference based on medium $F(1,82)=13.87$ $p<.000$. In other words, reading two cognitively involving newspaper stories produced significantly better recall of facts than reading one newspaper story and viewing one television story.

The story about the Yellowstone fires also produced significant differences based on information consistency. Those who had read that forest fires can be good for the environment tended to recall facts from the second story that were consistent with that premise. ANOVA produced a significant difference based on message consistency $F(1,81)=5.21$ $p<.025$. This is an important finding. It provides support for the proposition that people concentrate more on message consistency when the information is cognitively involving. By contrast, emotions seem to wash out this rational fact-finding approach to information acquisition in emotionally involving news.

Taken together, the data provide moderate support for Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4

The fourth hypothesis suggested people *recall facts more accurately* from newspaper stories than from equivalent television news stories when the stories to which the viewer is exposed are cognitively involving. Aided recall examinations were used to test this hypothesis.

For six of the seven items drawn from the second story, individuals who had read (as opposed to having viewed) the newspaper account responded most accurately. However, only one of the seven statements produced a

significant result. Hence, although the results were in the predicted direction, the hypothesis failed to receive sufficient support.

However, another finding is worthy of note. For five of the seven statements, individuals who had been supplied with consistent sets of news stories responded most accurately. In each case, individuals who had read that forest fires are beneficial to the environment followed by either a newspaper or television story supporting that position, chose points on the scale that were most accurate. Although Recall items 5 and 6 failed to produce significant results, the direction was consistent with the other five items. Table 2 presents this finding.⁷

TABLE 2

<u>Facts</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Sig. of F</u>
Item 1	1	8.03	.006 **
Item 2	1	6.59	.012 *
Item 3	1	10.36	.002 **
Item 4	1	16.57	.000 ***
Item 5	1	0.88	.767
Item 6	1	2.56	.113
Item 7	1	4.63	.035 *

* p < .05

** p < .01

*** p < .001

In other words, medium appears to have had minimal effect in terms of producing accurate recall for the stories dealing with forest fires. The main effect was produced by information consistency. Those who were given two stories that contained facts that were generally consistent demonstrated the most accurate recall of facts. Hence, the cognitive nature of the information seems to have largely washed out the effect of medium for this type of story.

DISCUSSION

This study was designed to address several issues. First, it sought to determine if television is related to amount and accuracy of recall in emotionally involving news stories. Second, it sought to determine if newspaper reading is related to amount and accuracy recall in cognitively involving news stories and different types of news stories.

This research is discussed in three phases: 1) limitations to generalizability, 2) interpretation of the findings, and 3) overview of the results and their implications.

Limitations to Generalizability

The sample used was composed of college students. Differences based on education, age, income and the like may produce strikingly different results. This caveat suggests the need to replicate this study with other samples using different involving issues.

A second limitation concerns the experimental environment. People may attend to messages differently in an experiment than when watching an evening newscast at home or relaxing with the evening newspaper. However, artificiality was reduced to the extent that the newspaper and television stories were professionally produced. The articles had been written by professional journalists and had been professionally typeset or produced.

Interpretation of the Findings

Graber (1988) suggests that people use cognitive schemata to "tame the information tide." She notes that people systematically exclude two-thirds of all news items encountered in a newspaper. In similar fashion, people

recall only about one in 15-to-18 items presented in a typical newscast. But she points out that people extract limited amounts of information from news stories that they consider important for incorporation into their thinking. Graber (pg. 202) explained it this way:

The schema process facilitates integration of new information into existing knowledge. Since news sources usually present the news in isolated snippets, without sufficient background, schemas allow the receivers to incorporate the news into a meaningful context. During relatedness searches, the information extracted from a news story may be integrated into a single schema, or it may be segmented and the segments incorporated into several schemas. Alternatively, the same segments may become part of several schemas. In this way, a single story may be used to substantially broaden an individual's store of knowledge. If it becomes apparent that the new information is not needed because it is redundant or because it does not conform to previous knowledge that seems sound, the schema process allows the unwanted information to slip from available memory.

The process as outlined by Graber would seem to explain differences in processing demonstrated in this study. For the cognitively involving story, a schema for forest fires was summoned. Then people conducted relatedness searches to see if the new information was consistent with what they knew.

This may explain why individuals who read that the Yellowstone fires were beneficial, and then viewed a television story consistent with that position, demonstrated very poor recall of facts from the television story ($x = 0.7$). Since the second story provided very little new information, this new information failed to obtrude. Conversely, those who read that fires were destructive, and then read a story inconsistent with that position, recalled from the second story ($x = 3.7$). In effect, the cognitive process of thinking about the inconsistencies after having been forced to exert the effort of reading, may have made people remember more-- at least in the short term.

Television did extraordinarily well in terms of teaching people that the sun posed certain dangers to one's health. Consistent with research by McClure and Patterson (1976), television seems to affect story salience when relevant and emotionally involving information was presented. A story indicating that the sun is dangerous may have elicited enough fear to make additional information on the subject salient because people thought that paying attention might help them avoid bodily harm. The end result was that additional processing effort was exerted and the television story about the sun facilitated learning.

As Gunter, Berry and Clifford (1982) contend, learning and retention of television news depends vitally on the way information is structured and presented in the bulletins. This suggests that broadcast communicators should strive to make direct personal linkages between the message and receiver (Krugman, 1965). Further, it seems that information assimilation is enhanced when people are provided with a sufficient knowledge base upon which to build.

By contrast, newspapers seem to be excellent teachers when the information presented is of a more cognitive, less emotionally involving nature. It is possible that self-paced processing provides people with an opportunity to become interested in news stories.

Overview of the Implications

This study suggests that processing of media information can be enhanced based on a number of variables including medium and nature of the story. Television appears to have an edge if it provides emotionally involving messages. Newspapers appear to hold an edge for conveying cognitively involving information.

As noted by Robinson and Levy (1986, pg. 234):

No one news medium should be viewed as "most" predominant. The public employs a variety of information sources and search strategies to keep informed about what is happening. Looking for the "Number 1" medium is a pointless exercise, because people use so many media for different purposes (e.g., TV for awareness, newspapers for explanation, or vice versa depending on the story involved).

Future research should endeavor to strengthen the linkage between concepts such as involvement and cognitive schemata. Literature from social psychology, consumer behavior, advertising and marketing may help in this regard. The uses and gratifications approach may also help explain why people seem to respond to equivalent messages differently when they are presented in different media.

But work along these lines may have implications beyond academe. If media are capable of interacting with the learning process based on type of information, then news managers might better serve the public in terms of supplying that which is most usable for their audience through the medium with which they are affiliated. Future researchers should consider this point in designing studies.

However, a good deal of work remains to be done. For example, this study should be replicated with recall examinations after several days, weeks or months to assess the relative potency of medium over time. And, other types of stories should be incorporated into the experimental design.

Given these caveats, the study does suggest that the enterprise of investigating media effectiveness with respect to differing types of information is a worthwhile enterprise. Finally, it suggests that theoretical approaches such as schema theory and the involvement construct can work together to explain the complex mental processes associated with learning from the news.

NOTES

¹The schema concept has received considerable attention in the literature periodically throughout the Twentieth Century. Asch (1946), Bartlett (1932) and Lippmann (1922) are often viewed as the starting point in the schema literature. More recently, however, scholarly interest in the construct has accelerated dramatically. As a result, excellent theoretical discussions and empirical studies on cognitive schemata have enriched the information processing literature. Among the best examples of work on schemata are Abelson (1976), Bower, Black and Turner (1979), Cantor and Mischel (1977), Cohen (1981), Crocker, Fiske and Taylor (1984), Crockett (1988), Fiske and Dyer (1985), Fiske and Taylor (1984), Fiske and Kinder (1981), Fiske and Linville (1980), Fiske, Taylor and Etcoff (1979), Garramone, Steele and Pinkleton (1989), Graber, (1988), Hastie (1981), Lau (1986), Markus (1977), Markus and Smith (1981), Meadowcroft and Reeves, (1989), Minsky (1975), Norman and Bobrow (1976), Ostrom, Pryor and Simpson (1981), O'Sullivan and Durso (1984), Reeves, Chaffee and Tims (1982), Rosch (1978), Rosch, Mervis, Gray, Johnson, and Boyes-Braem, 1975; Schank and Abelson (1977), Taylor (1981), Taylor and Crocker (1981), Tesser (1978), and Valenti and Tesser (1981).

² People draw on schemata to make sense of new information. Terms such as prototypes (Canter and Mischel, 1977, 1979), frames (Minsky, 1975), stereotypes (Lippmann, 1922) and social scripts (Schank and Abelson, 1977) all refer to a categorization plan by which an individual summons a concrete image of the "average category member" (Rosch, Mervis, Gray, Johnson and Boyes-Braem, 1975; Rosch, 1978).

³The experiment was conducted prior to the student uprising in the Spring of 1989.

⁴The instructions stated: "Please list the facts in the order in which they occur to you about all of the news stories you can remember. You have 12 minutes to complete this list. Please leave a line between each fact."

⁵The instructions stated: "Please list the facts in the order in which they occur to you about the news on all of the news on POPULATION. You have 5 minutes to complete this list." The same instructions were then provided for the news on FIRES.

⁶The statements below correspond to the items in Table 1.

1. Sunglasses may not provide protection against the dangerous rays of the sun.
2. The UV rays can cause skin cancer and cataracts.
3. Researchers say that most sunglasses are not adequate since they fail to filter out harmful UV rays from the sun.
4. Sunlight reflecting off sand at the beach can intensify UV rays which may cause permanent blindness.

5. Darker lenses primarily filter out glare--not UV rays.
6. Darker lenses cause people to open their eyes wider and take in more UV rays.
7. Squinting or wearing a hat with a brim will filter out more UV light than many of the sunglasses you can buy.

⁷The statements below correspond to the items in Table 2.

1. Yellowstone National Park will be a healthier place as a result of the fires last summer.
2. Large trees shade the forest floor making it difficult for new plants to grow. Fire cleanses a forest making room for new growth.
3. Yellowstone National Park will rebound quickly. Within a couple of years it will be as spectacular as ever.
4. Animals such as grizzly bears and moose have difficulty finding food in older forests containing mostly large trees.
5. Mount Saint Helens is a good example of Mother Nature's ability to cope with natural catastrophes.
6. Wildlife and vegetation will soon replace the destruction at Yellowstone.
7. The Yellowstone fires are a new beginning--not an end.

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GRAPHIC FORMS IN NETWORK TELEVISION NEWS

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ABSTRACT

GRAPHIC FORMS IN NETWORK TELEVISION NEWS

This content analysis of the three network evening news programs found clear differences in the use of graphic forms from network to network with ABC distinguishing itself from the rest by relying on more complex, fast-paced visual movement to complement its stories. CBS and NBC, by contrast, relied heavily on a slower paced assortment of still images.

GRAPHIC FORMS IN NETWORK TELEVISION NEWS

Previous analyses of verbal content have shown that the three network television newscasts are much more alike than different in their story selection, story order, and portrayal of events on the evening news.¹ Yet, there is no evidence to suggest that there is a corresponding similarity in visual form, the state, structure, or character in which visual information or content appears.

The visual form is important in conveying the meaning, significance, or aesthetic value of the visual content. While the types of network news stories and their verbal forms have remained relatively static over the past twenty years, the visual forms to those stories have increased and changed radically, especially in terms of graphics. As Zettl explains, there has been a "graphication" of television news:

Computer-generated graphics pop on the screen to give us headlines, field reporters and their stories are squeezezoomed in and out over the news anchor's shoulder, and fancy lettering repeats what we have heard the newscaster tell us. Through the magic of digital video, live scenes are frozen into still images and peeled off page by page as though we were flipping through a magazine.²

Empirical studies examining nonverbal, visual production variables have focused mainly on lighting, visual cues, clothing

of anchors and correspondents, color versus black-and-white presentation, non-verbal expression, movement, transitions, screen space pacing redundancy, camera angles, image size and format.³ Little form analysis research has been done to document or define the use or specific functions of graphics such as video images, photographs, symbols, illustrations, maps, diagrams, and cartoons which accompany most news stories. Yet, these forms of visual communication seem to play a steadily increasing role in television news. Schamber suggests that anyone interested in working in or studying television news should develop specific skills to understand visual grammar and syntax and be able to integrate visual and verbal content at every stage of the journalistic process.⁴

The purpose of this study is to define the use of graphics as a visual form of communication on the network television evening news and examine whether or not likenesses in terms of graphics exist among the networks similar to those observed in previous research on verbal content. The research questions are as follows:

1. What forms and quantities of graphics are presented on the network television evening news programs?
2. What functions do graphics serve on the network evening news?
3. Are their differences in the way the three networks portray stories graphically on the evening news?
4. What characteristics distinguish graphic coverage on

each network?

Method

The thirty minute evening newscasts of the three commercial television networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) were taped on nine randomly selected dates between February 9, 1988 and April 5, 1988, providing a total of twenty-seven newscasts with 430 stories and 674 graphics. The unit of analysis was the news story. The coding categories included: the network on which a story appeared, graphic combinations used in the story, graphic kinds, graphic movements, and graphic functions. Nine different variables were allotted for graphic kinds, movements, and functions (ex: Kind1, Kind2, Kind3) to allow for examination of a series of individual graphics in each story.

The study primarily used Zettl's definition of television graphics as "all two dimensional visuals especially prepared for the television camera such as a studio or title cards, illustrations, maps, or charts. Electronically generated titles, charts or animation--even if appearing three dimensional--are also a part of television graphics."⁵

For the purpose of this study, a graphic was further defined as a complete visual message whether still or moving, singular or sequential in structure regardless of the length of time it appears. A graphic began when an initial graphic image represented a visual message and ended when the visual message was

complete and no longer required the presentation of the visual image. Another way of identifying the beginning of a graphic was the appearance of one of its elements on the screen. Likewise, the end of a graphic occurred when one of the graphic elements was replaced by a non-graphic image or faded from the screen. Many times, graphic images were transformed into another image or linked together. For the purposes of this study, such multiple images were defined as one graphic. An example of a single composite graphic would be an illustration of a globe, followed by manipulation of the globe to replace the "o" in the word "cold" followed by the word cold with the globe now rotating on its axis.

The message represented by the graphic could be simple or complex. It varied in meaning with the syntactical structuring and manipulation through movement of the visual elements which comprised it. Each graphic represented a different message despite the length of time the graphic appeared and despite any movement within the graphic.

Graphic kinds included (1) symbols/typography; (2) illustrations; (3) map, graph, diagram; (4) film or video; (5) cartoons (still and animated); (6) photographs; and (7) composite, a graphic made up of two or more of the above kinds. Video and film were defined as graphics if they did not fill the entire screen. This manner of video presentation requires additional preparation beyond editing and playing. It also alters the composition and visual framing, thus transforming the

message to graphic representation. For example, tape running in a chroma key behind the anchor would be considered a graphic while that same tape offered on full screen would not. If a video was combined with another established graphic kind such as a symbol, it was also considered a graphic. For the purposes of this study, titles and credits were not considered graphics unless alphabetic and/or numeric characters were graphically altered to appear symbolic of a given subject.

Seven values were established to document the basic functions of graphics: (1) establishing/introductory; (2) information/explanatory; (3) concept/story idea; (4) background; (5) composite; (6) other; (7) preview. The following four values were assigned to the graphic movement variable: (1) still graphics (photographs, symbols/typography, illustrations); (2) moving graphics (video, film, animation); (3) special effects (electronic movement of graphics) and (4) a composite of any of these movements.

In addition to the movement variable, a combination variable was constructed to ascertain what patterns developed within a story regardless of the number of individual graphics. The four categories for graphic combination were: (1) still graphics (photographs, symbols, illustrations, typography); (2) moving graphics (video, film, animation); (3) special effects (electronic movement of graphics); and composites (a graphic made up of two or more graphic kinds).

Each coder coded nine newscasts from one network. In an

attempt to increase the coder's "visual literacy," coders were trained using a coding manual which defined verbally and depicted visually graphic kinds, types, and functions.⁶ Coders were encouraged to review newscasts repeatedly to breakdown data which frequently displayed multiple visual stimuli.

A subsample of three newscasts was recoded to check for accuracy. Of the 953 possible coding decisions in the subsample, 891 were made correctly for an overall mean accuracy of 94% (ABC 96%; CBS 89%; NBC 96%). To improve the level of accuracy overall, and especially for the CBS newscasts, another coder compared the content of all twenty-seven newscasts with the coding sheets, raising the agreement to near 100%. Because few judgments were required by the coders in the study, this double check of the data accuracy was sufficient to eliminate any coding inaccuracies.

Results

Graphics were pervasive on the network evening news with 78% of all stories containing some type of graphic coverage. Newscasts used an average of 25 graphics per program, ranging from 34 graphics per newscast on ABC to 18 on NBC. The average number of graphics per story was 1.5 overall (1.8 on ABC; 1.6 on CBS; and 1.3 on NBC). When non-graphics stories were discounted, the average rose to two graphics per story. ABC supplied 45% of all graphics in the study compared to 30% for CBS and 24% for

NBC.

ABC clearly dominated in the presentation of varied graphics, providing more than two-thirds of the visuals which reflected all three types of movement (stills, moving graphics, and special effects) in one story. As Table 1 shows, CBS and NBC adopted much simpler graphics patterns; two-thirds of their combined graphics in a story were stills compared to only one-third for ABC.

ABC's visual complexity was again revealed when single graphics were isolated; forty percent of ABC's individual graphics included still and moving and/or special effect characteristics. In contrast, 79% of CBS's individual graphics and 73% of NBC's used stills exclusively. ABC used twice as many moving graphics as its two competitors combined. When ABC used special effects, however, they were always in conjunction with moving or still graphics or both.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Each network embraced a visual sequencing which characterized its graphics coverage (See Table 2). NBC, for example, hardly used symbols/typography, maps, or video graphics, but used far more illustrations and photos than its competition. The reliance on composite graphics was evident with each network using them about fifty percent of the time. ABC relied far less on still photographs than the other networks, using more video

footage instead.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Graphics coverage seemed to have well-defined functions on network news, mainly to introduce a story (41%) or to explain some element of a story (32%). Only fourteen percent of the graphics were used as background. NBC used graphics to introduce a story 55% of the time compared to 33% for ABC which used more of its time to explain stories (34%) and to give graphics enhanced previews of upcoming stories (15%).

While there was an average of nearly two graphics per news story for all the networks, ABC frequently went far beyond that. ABC had 77% of the stories that used six or more graphics. In one instance, ABC used seven separate graphics in a story lasting only one minute and twenty seconds. Eighty percent of NBC's stories and 76% of CBS's never went beyond two graphics.

A typical ABC graphic was a composite made up of symbol/typography and video. ABC frequently mixed its videotape with its graphics while CBS and NBC preferred to show film and video on full screen without graphic adornment. For example, when a Kuwaiti airliner was hijacked, ABC placed the video of a plane in a chroma key box and then superimposed the video over a still map of the Middle East; an arrow generated through special effects then appeared to show the hijacked plane's path. When CBS or NBC used composite graphics, it was usually a still photo

in conjunction with symbol/typography. ABC's marriage of video with graphics and its frequent use of multiple graphics in a single story provided a a quicker pace to their video coverage. By contrast, CBS and NBC coverage seemed more straightforward and slower paced.

Discussion

Graphic forms on the evening news have become a mainstay of network television news, appearing in a high percentage of all stories. As all three television networks have begun to rely more on graphics to communicate the news, visual manipulation, selection, sequencing, and purpose have emerged on each that could affect how viewers comprehend the news. While there are documented similarities in verbal content use on network news, this study found clear differences in the use of graphic forms from network to network with ABC distinguishing itself from the rest by relying on more complex, fast paced visual movements to complement its stories. CBS and NBC, by contrast, relied heavily on a slower paced assortment of still images.

Composite graphic kinds now account for more than half of all graphics coverage and serve primarily to introduce stories and to help explain their meanings. In general, graphics are becoming more complex as networks rely less on still images standing alone and move towards composite graphics which employ still, moving, and electronically manipulated images.

While this exploratory study has established a baseline for graphic use on network television news, to be conclusive regarding the significance of graphic representation would require a comparison of graphic frequency to video/film, anchor/correspondent visual use as well as documentation of the amount of time spent on presenting different forms of visual communication. There is also the question of whether the visual message should be segregated from the audio message in coding network news. Would the function of a graphic, for example, be as clearly identifiable if the audio accompaniment to a story were not available? Further research might also want to consider documenting the linear quality, shape, value, texture, color, space, forms of expression, and composition of individual graphics.

As visuals become more integral to the production of network news, there will be a greater need to examine the effect of graphic content in terms of descriptive properties and the sensory, psychological, or emotional properties that we tend to respond to or ignore. There is also a need to examine the effect of graphics on the viewer in terms of comprehension and recall. Do faster paced, more complex graphics, like on ABC, promote or retard understanding of the news? Do the national network graphic styles influence local news presentation of graphics? Do graphic styles influence viewers' selection of a network newscast? What is the role of the network graphic designer and/or the news director in influencing the selection of graphic

forms? Do viewers perceive differences in graphics style among competing networks? Is the ability to read, interpret and evaluate these visual forms of communication a prerequisite to understanding the news? Can we now assume visual literacy on the part of the audience; and are news managers, who may not be visually literate, in the best position to have a final say as to the visual make-up of a newscast?

This myriad of questions begins to reveal the unidentified nature of this important form of visual communications. There is ample opportunity for exploration of the visual and audio make-up of the news, separately and collectively. It is through a thorough study of the totality of the news message that new ground may be broken in content analysis research which may, in turn, facilitate research on agenda-setting, comprehension and recall, passive learning, and visual literacy.

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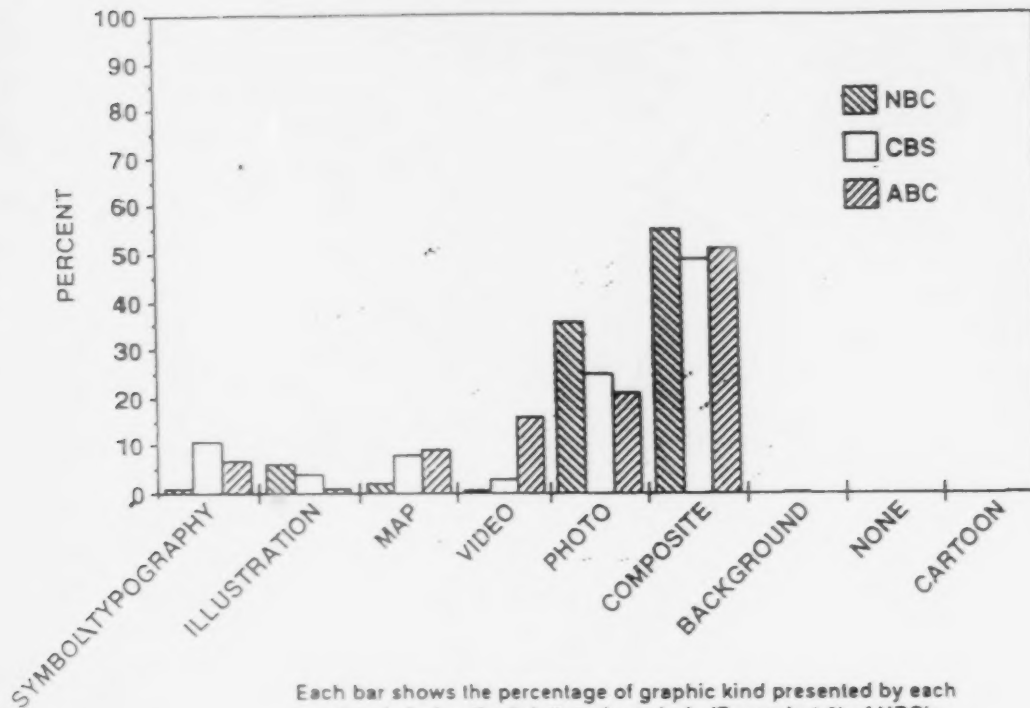
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TABLE 1
GRAPHIC COMBINATIONS IN A STORY

	STILL	MOVING	STILL/MOVING
ABC	44 24%	16 47%	70 59%
CBS	73 40%	18 53%	16 13%
NBC	68 37%	0 0%	33 28%

$\chi^2 > .0000$ d.f. 4

TABLE 2
CUMULATIVE GRAPHIC KINDS



VCR Attitudes and Behaviors by Length of VCR Presence

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VCR Attitudes and Behaviors by Length of VCR Presence**Abstract**

Previous research on the VCR has paid minimal attention to: (1) the time dimension, (2) differentiating groups of VCR owners, and (3) random probability samples. This study addressed these shortcomings by dividing a random sample of VCR adopters (n= 579) into four groups by length of VCR presence. Differences among VCR adopters by length of VCR presence were found in presence of other communication technologies, attitudes about VCR use, television viewing behaviors, VCR recording behaviors, and videocassette rental behaviors.

VCR Attitudes and Behaviors by Length of VCR Presence

The diffusion of new communication technologies over time has broad implications for the study of mass communication (Rogers, 1986), yet the literature on the temporal aspect of new media diffusion is lacking (Williams, Rice, and Rogers, 1988). The gradual evolution from established media systems to a new media environment challenges media research, economics, and policy (Webster, 1986; 1989). This study focused on the adoption of the videocassette recorder (VCR) because (1) the VCR provides a useful example of a recent communication technology that diffused rapidly (Klopfenstein, 1989b); (2) the VCR has potentially great impacts on television audience behavior and, therefore, the television industry (Klopfenstein, 1990; Levy, 1989); and (3) the VCR precedes impending digital technologies that will perform similar program storage and retrieval functions, including fiber-to-the-home (Klopfenstein, 1987).

Previous VCR research has paid minimal attention to (1) a time dimension, (2) differentiating VCR adopting groups, and (3) random probability samples. The present study has three corresponding objectives: (1) an investigation of how time since adoption of the VCR is related to both VCR attitudes and behaviors, (2) segmentation of groups of VCR households based on this time dimension, and (3) use of a random sample survey to describe a more representative population of VCR users than most previous research.

The Time Dimension

Time is an increasingly important variable in the study of new communication technologies (Williams, Rice, and Rogers, 1988; Rogers, 1986; Greenberg and Lin, 1989). Time has always been integral in diffusion of innovations research, yet much of the

existing technology adoption research has not incorporated time into the analytical process (Rogers, 1983).¹ Williams, Rice, and Rogers (1988) noted several reasons for the limited study of new media over time. These include substantial cost and effort, respondent attrition over time, selection of appropriate time intervals for study, use of more obscure statistical methods, loss of research interest in the new medium being studied, and a relative lack of theory about such processes. Although measuring changes at different points over time is the ideal way to examine the new media adoption process, looking at length of technology presence may provide an indication of longitudinal change.

Adopters may be classified based on the point in time at which the innovation is adopted (or rejected). Five categories of adopters proposed by Rogers (1983) are classified according to the relative point in time at which they adopt an innovation. Diffusion research indicates that there are important differences among various adopting groups in the use of a new media technology. The literature on differences in adopters' uses of and attitudes toward new media by length of its presence generally is limited because new media often have diffused more quickly than scholars have been able to study them (see Olshavasky, 1980).

Klopfenstein and Swanson (1987) found that VCR use was greater in the households in which the VCR had been adopted earlier, and Montesano (1986, as cited in Levy and Gunter, 1988) found an inverse relationship between length of VCR presence and prerecorded video rental and purchase behavior. Additionally, Lindstrom (1989) found that earlier adopters of VCRs watched more television and recorded more than later adopters. Kitchen and Yorke (1986) found that British VCR owners said they were recording more and viewing prerecorded tapes less over time. Such research

raises questions about how length of presence of a new technology like the VCR affects attitudes and behaviors.

Segmenting VCR Households

A few studies have segmented VCR adopters using a variety of methods including length of VCR presence. Potter, Forrest, Sapolsky, and Ware (1988) categorized VCR users by behaviors: time shifters (17.8%), source shifters (12.0%), videophiles (14.7%), low users (14.0%) and the remainder as regular users (30.8%). Henke and Donohue (1989) identified and described two VCR groups, tapers and non-tapers. Lindlof and Shatzer (1989) divided 14 VCR families into three types using Q methodology.

Few studies on VCR use by length of presence in the household have emerged. Levy & Gunter (1988) divided British VCR owners into six groups based on length of VCR presence to study behavioral and attitudinal differences, but there are differences between the television environment in Great Britain and the United States. For instance, there were only four television channels in England at the time of the study.

Greenberg and Lin (1989) studied two groups of students: "New VCR" (ownership two years or less) and "Old VCR" (ownership more than two years), but found a "disappointing" lack of significant differences between the VCR behaviors of their sample. Lindstrom (1989) divided VCR users by length of VCR presence in the household to examine VCR use in the general television environment and reported that earlier adopters of VCRs watched more television and recorded more than later adopters. No clear conclusions may be drawn from these results, and further investigation is warranted.

Thus, our study identified four relatively equally-sized groups of VCR homes by length of ownership: (1) three years or more (first adopters), (2) between two and three years (early adopters), (3) between one and two years (recent adopters), and (4) for less than one year (newest adopters). When this survey was conducted, the VCR had been available for more than a decade; thus, data could be collected from users who had owned their VCRs for a period long enough to no longer be considered "novelty" users (Von Hippel, 1986).

The advantage of segmenting VCR owners into four groups rather than just two (new and old adopters) is that there may be a curvilinear relationship between length of VCR presence and various VCR outcomes. For instance, it may be that adopters who have had the VCR long enough to have gained familiarity with the recording functions, but not so long that they lost interest in the device, may record more than either the first or the newest adopters.

Sampling Limitations of VCR Research

Although a comprehensive review of existing VCR research is beyond the scope of this paper,² one limitation of much published VCR research is the lack of random sampling (due, in part, to limited VCR penetration in the past). Rubin and Bantz (1987) explored VCR gratifications, for example, by questioning a nonprobability sample of VCR users, one third of whom were students. Gunter and Levy (1987) used an "interlocking quota sample based on respondent sex, age, and social class" in England to investigate the social setting of home video viewing. Cohen (1987) observed renters in various Israeli video stores to learn more about how people selected prerecorded rental tapes. Greenberg and Heeter (1987) purposively surveyed 9th and 10th grade students in the Detroit area to investigate relationships between VCR and other media

use. Roe (1987) also questioned 9th-year students in three areas in Sweden to learn about the relationship between achievement in school and VCR use. Kim, Baran, and Massey (1988) interviewed a convenience sample of parent-child pairs about their VCR use. These early studies sacrificed generalizability to gain sufficient number of VCR adopters, thus limiting the conclusions to the populations under study.

Even more recent research has not used randomly selected samples. Potter et al. (1988) and Henke and Donohue (1989) each based their studies on a sample of video club members. Like many investigations of children's media use, Lin and Atkin (1989) used a convenience sample of seventh and tenth graders to investigate parental mediation roles in video use. Lindlof and Shatzer (1989) used a purposive sample of fourteen families who were selected because they were two-parent, VCR families with at least one child 13 years of age or under.³ Morgan, Shanahan, and Harris (1990) did a longitudinal study of adolescents (grades 7 through 12).

As far as we can determine, Lindstrom (1989) and Lin (1990) are the only articles to date that cite data clearly collected from randomly selected respondents.⁴ The absence of more generalizable random sample surveys has left a void in VCR research, especially given the probable changing nature of the VCR audience. The random sample survey used for this study addresses that need.

Theoretical Framework

This research examines the question of how attitudes and behaviors related to one communication technology, the VCR, varied depending on length of presence in the households. One possibility is that VCR use increases as owners gain mastery of the device. The concept of "familiarity" suggests that adopters learn, perhaps through a trial and error process, how to use the newly adopted technology. A related concept is

"reinvention," the "degree to which an innovation is changed or modified by a user in the process of its adoption and implementation" (Rogers, 1983, p. 16). Diffusion researchers have pointed to reinvention as one example of how adopters in the process of gaining familiarity with an innovation may modify the innovation or its applications. Von Hippel (1986) similarly pointed out that "lead users" may discover product uses not anticipated by developers. Thus, VCR owners who initially purchase the device simply to playback tapes, for example, may modify their involvement with the machine to include the recording function. The concepts of familiarity and reinvention suggest that with the passage of time, VCR use may increase or diversify.

Conversely, the concept of "discontinuance" (Rogers, 1983) suggests that adopters may decide "to reject an innovation after having previously adopted it" (p. 186). If over time VCR owners lose interest in or become dissatisfied with the device, then VCR usage would decrease. "Disenchanted discontinuance" is a decision to reject an innovation because of dissatisfaction with its performance. Sparkes and Kang (1986), for example, used a panel study in Syracuse, New York to uncover disenchanted discontinuance of cable after initial adoption by some subscribers. Sparkes and Delbel (1989) further reviewed this research on the disenchanted discontinuance of cable television. Nielsen vice president Paul Lindstrom (1989) said that the "average" number of recordings in VCR households decreased from 1984 to 1987, and Nielsen reported that "average" VCR activity dropped slightly from July 1985 to July 1986 (Multichannel News, November 10, 1986). These data could be interpreted to mean that the VCR, like cable television before it, might be losing favor with adopters.

In our research, the concept of continuance represents the null hypothesis. If VCR users' attitudes and behaviors do not change over time, based on length of VCR

presence, then there should be no differences between adopting groups. Conversely, if length of VCR presence *does* affect attitudes and behaviors, then attitudinal and behavioral differences may be found.

The question remains: Which of these concepts (continuance, discontinuance, familiarity, or reinvention) applies to the VCR and under what conditions? Adopters who have owned a VCR for many years may differ from adopters who have only recently purchased a VCR. This study compared the attitudes and behaviors of VCR adopters based on four categories of length of VCR presence in the household.

One possible difference between VCR household groups based on length of VCR presence may be related to demographics. Initial adopters of new communication technologies generally tend to be more educated and of higher income than later adopters (Rogers, 1986). Because VCR prices were higher in 1984 than 1987 (Klopfenstein, 1989b), earlier VCR adopters could be expected to be of higher income. Therefore, income and education need to be taken into account when explaining VCR attitudes and behaviors.

Rogers (1986) also speculated that there may be a group of innovators who are consistently the first to adopt each of the new communication technologies. Thus, first adopters of VCRs are expected to have adopted more communication technologies than later adopters.⁶

Earlier adopters may be more familiar with their VCRs, or may have found new uses for them, resulting in more positive attitudes about their machines' capabilities. Therefore, the longer the VCR presence, the more likely owners may: feel that watching network television is a waste of time, feel that recording network television is time-efficient, and feel happy with VCR ownership. There may also be a

relationship between length of VCR presence and watching television to relax or enjoying network shows.

The finding that initial adopters of communication technologies are socioeconomic elites (Rogers, 1986) may be translated into television behaviors, both viewing and recording. Regarding viewing behaviors, broadcast television has been traditionally targeted to the "lowest common denominator" (Dominick, Sherman, & Copeland, 1990). Because earlier adopters were more likely to be socioeconomic elites, they may also be lighter viewers of television than recent adopters. Another aspect of viewing is changing channels to avoid commercials. Because earlier VCR adopters may be more comfortable with other technologies like the remote control device (RCD), they may also be more likely to use the RCD to avoid commercials. Thus, the longer the VCR presence, the more likely users will be to avoid commercials by changing channels. Additionally, length of VCR presence may be related to the viewing of particular television genres (e.g., Tiedge and Ksobiech [1986] used eleven program types to study television viewing). Greenberg and Lin (1989) did not find significant differences in genre preferences based on their two groups of VCR adopters.

As for recording behaviors, the concept of familiarity may play a role in the way VCR users differ in recording behaviors. VCR owners who adopted earlier may be more familiar with the recording functions and may record more. Moreover, if earlier adopters dislike lowest common denominator programs and, accordingly, are more selective in their television viewing, they may see more utility in the recording function of the VCR. Thus, earlier VCR adopters may be expected to watch less television overall than later adopters, but to record more for greater utility. Once again, the genre of the shows recorded may reflect the dislike of lowest common denominator

programs, suggesting that earlier adopters may be more likely to record news and public affairs.

With regard to cassette rental behaviors, the picture is less clear. Earlier adopters may be expected to rent because of familiarity. More recent adopters, however, may have been motivated to purchase their VCRs for the playback of rentals because of the increasingly large number of rental stores and videos available (Wiese, 1989). To investigate the possible relationships between length of VCR presence and cassette rental behaviors we examined the following: number of rentals, anticipated number of rentals, number of days per week the VCR is used for playback of rentals, renting with advanced planning, waiting for movies to come out on home video, and video club membership.

In summary, our research addressed the relationships between length of VCR presence and (1) presence of other communication technologies, (2) attitudes about the VCR and its use, (3) television viewing behaviors, (4) VCR recording use behaviors, and (5) cassette rental behaviors.

Method

A 15-minute telephone survey instrument was constructed based on a pilot study (Klopfenstein and Swanson, 1987). The random survey was conducted during the first three weeks of October 1987, when the VCR had been adopted by the four groups in fairly equivalent numbers. The October time frame allowed measurement of television viewing behaviors at near average levels for the entire year (avoiding the high and low peaks in winter and summer respectively). A total of 1,000 interviews of television households in a medium-sized, midwestern market were completed (65.1% response rate). Telephone numbers were dialed at random according to standard

procedures established and validated by a large, privately-held market research firm. Numbers were randomly drawn from the telephone directory with a single digit being added to all selected numbers to include unlisted numbers in the sampling frame (Wimmer & Dominick, 1987). Ten percent of the questionnaires were validated by the firm.

Of the 1000 households contacted, 58.3% owned a VCR and of those, 15% owned more than one VCR. Klopfenstein (1988) reviewed aspects of the total households including non-VCR households. The results presented in this paper are limited only to respondents from VCR households who also answered the question about length of VCR ownership ($n=579$).

The instrument contained demographic variables and 101 items to address the research areas noted above; a copy is available from the authors.⁶ Items included questions about presence of various communication technologies (e.g., cable television, personal computer, compact disc player, etc.) in the household. Attitudinal items measured respondents' level of agreement (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) regarding satisfaction with broadcast television and VCRs. Behavioral items included total hours of daily television viewing and frequency (regularly, occasionally, rarely or never) of viewing 11 broadcast television program genres: situation comedies, hour-long dramatic series, daytime soap operas, sports, local news, network news, news magazines, game shows, movies on broadcast television, late night talk shows, and public television shows. VCR owners were asked how often they recorded each of these program genres as well as how often they practiced a variety of recording and commercial avoidance behaviors. Additional items asked respondents about videocassette rental behaviors and beliefs.

Of the 579 VCR owners in the sample, 28.3% had owned them three years or more (first adopters, $n = 164$), 21.8% had them between two and three years (early adopters, $n = 126$), 24.5% had them between one and two years (recent adopters, $n = 142$), and 25.4% had them less than one year (newest adopters, $n = 147$).⁷ There was a significant difference between groups in household income ($F [3, 559] = 5.8, p < .001$). A Tukey test revealed that the two groups with two or more years of ownership had a significantly higher income than the two groups with less than two years of ownership. No significant differences were found between various adopters on measures of the respondent's age or education, nor the principle income earner's age or education.

Results

Presence of Other Communication Technologies

As indicated in Table 1, there was a significant relationship between length of VCR presence in the home and presence of a number of other communication technologies. The longer the VCR presence, the more likely the presence of multiple television sets ($\chi^2 = 36.4, p < .001$) and multiple VCRs in the household ($\chi^2 = 54.2, p < .001$). The longer the VCR presence, the more likely the household was to subscribe to cable ($\chi^2 = 14.29, p < .01$); of all cable subscribers, earlier adopters were more likely to purchase pay channels ($\chi^2 = 16.8, p < .05$). Furthermore, the longer the VCR presence, the more likely the presence of a personal computer ($\chi^2 = 9.41, p < .05$), a compact disc player ($\chi^2 = 10.83, p < .01$), a video camera ($\chi^2 = 32.31, p < .01$) and a stereo television set ($\chi^2 = 8.53, p < .05$). No relationship was found between length of VCR presence and ownership of a phone answering machine or a television remote control device.

A "technology ownership" score ranging from 0 to 10 was calculated. Respondents were assigned one point for ownership of each of the following: more than one TV, more than one VCR, personal computer, compact disk player, video camera, stereo TV set, phone answering machine, remote control device, subscription to cable, and subscription to a pay cable channel. Although Cronbach's alpha on this 10-item index was a moderate .53, suggesting that a modest interpretation is appropriate. An analysis of variance showed a significant main effect of length of VCR ownership on technology ownership ($F [3, 573] = 20.21, p < .001$). A Tukey test revealed that first adopters owned significantly more technologies ($m = 4.62$) than either early adopters ($m = 4.10$) or recent adopters ($m = 3.71$). These latter two groups did not differ significantly from each other and, in turn, owned significantly more technologies ($m = 3.17$) than newest adopters. As Table 2 shows, a three-way analysis of variance of technology ownership by length of VCR ownership, education and income further revealed that length of VCR ownership ($F [3,416] = 15.26, p < .001$) and income ($F [2,416] = 8.94, p < .001$) were significant main effects. The two-way interaction between income and education was significant ($F [4,416] = 2.79, p < .05$). For lower education households, those with more income were more likely to own a greater number of technologies; for higher education households, those with more income were more likely to own fewer technologies. The remaining interactions were not significant.

Attitudes

Length of VCR presence was significantly related to attitudes about television viewing and VCR use (see Table 3). When asked whether watching network television is a waste of time, 28% of first adopters and 27% of early adopters agreed or strongly agreed, whereas only 17% of recent adopters and 19% of newest adopters agreed or

strongly agreed ($\chi^2 = 7.86$, $p < .05$). When asked whether recording network television is an efficient way to use one's time, 77% of all VCR owners agreed but adopters differed in their level of agreement. That is, strong agreement that recording network television is time-efficient was expressed by 33% of first adopters, 23% of early adopters, 15% of recent adopters and only 12% of newest adopters ($\chi^2 = 12.46$, $p < .01$). Length of VCR presence was not significantly related to expressed happiness with VCR ownership (which was quite high for all adopters), enjoyment of primetime network shows, nor watching television to relax.

Television Viewing Behaviors

Before being asked about VCR behaviors, respondents were asked general questions about television viewing behaviors. No relationship was found between length of VCR presence and self-reported hours of average daily television viewing. Length of VCR ownership was positively correlated with frequency of using a remote to change channels during broadcast commercials ($r = .10$, $p < .01$); the longer the VCR presence, the more likely respondents were to use the remote control to avoid commercials. Two significant relationships were found in reported viewing of 11 program genres (see Table 4): the longer the VCR presence, the less likely respondents were to report viewing of soap operas ($r = -.123$, $p < .01$) and hour-long dramas ($r = -.078$, $p < .05$).^a

VCR Recording Behaviors

There was a significant relationship between length of VCR presence and various VCR recording behaviors (see Table 5). The longer the VCR presence, the more likely respondents were to record television shows. Specifically, 80% of first adopters, 72% of early adopters, 73% of recent adopters and only 58% of newest

adopters ($\chi^2 = 17.6$, $p < .001$) used the VCR to record television shows. Length of VCR presence was positively correlated with recording a program while watching a different program ($r = .119$, $p < .01$), recording a program while not at home when the show airs ($r = .128$, $p < .01$), recording a program while sleeping when the show airs ($r = .111$, $p < .01$), and deleting the commercials while recording programs ($r = .098$, $p < .05$); the longer the VCR presence, the more likely respondents were to perform these behaviors. Regarding expected use of the VCR to record "in the coming year," 33% of newest adopters expected to record more than they did at the time, whereas only 20% of recent adopters, 23% of early adopters and 18% of first adopters expected to record more than their present amount ($\chi^2 = 17.3$, $p < .01$).

In terms of recording the 11 program genres, Table 4 shows that significant positive correlations were found between length of VCR presence and recording of sports programs ($r = .166$, $p < .001$), news magazines ($r = .164$, $p < .001$), local news ($r = .106$, $p < .05$), network news ($r = .117$, $p < .01$), and public television shows ($r = .107$, $p < .05$). The earlier the adoption, the more likely vcr users were to record shows in these genres. Although the correlations were also positive, no statistically significant differences among adopters were found in their recording of situation comedies, hour-long dramas, soap operas, game shows, movies, or late talk shows.

More than three-fourths of the respondents (77%) from all VCR households agreed or strongly agreed that having a VCR to skip commercials is appealing, but no relationship was found between this perception and length of VCR presence. Similarly, no relationship was found between length of VCR presence and responses to "avoiding commercials is an important reason to use a VCR": 47.8% of all VCR respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement.

Videocassette Rental

No relationship was found between length of VCR presence and number of tapes rented or number of days a week the VCR was used to watch rented tapes. When asked about expected use of the VCR for rented tapes in the coming year, 12% of all VCR owners said they expected to use the VCR less, 72% said they expected to use the VCR the same amount, and 16% said they expected to use the VCR more; no relationship was found between these responses and length of VCR presence. Positive correlations, however, were found between length of VCR presence and reported frequencies of knowing "what tape I am after when I go to the video store" ($r = .144$, $p < .01$), and waiting for "movies to come out on video rather than go to the movies" ($r = .089$, $p < .05$). The longer the VCR presence, the more likely VCR owners were to report purposeful tape selection and to delay movie viewing. Additionally, no relationship was found between length of VCR presence and video club membership.

Discussion and Conclusions

Differences among VCR adopters by length of VCR presence were found in presence of other communication technologies, attitudes about VCR use, television viewing behaviors, VCR recording behaviors, and videocassette rental behaviors. Because our results are based on a random sample survey of a medium-sized market, the findings are more generalizable than most previous VCR research.

Our results support past research that demographics predict communication technology adoption only some of the time. For example, we found that adoption of new technologies tends to begin with higher income households (Rogers, 1986). Unlike past research, however, education level was not a factor in this study of VCR adoption, suggesting that desire for the VCR transcends this important demographic variable.

The finding that first VCR adopters own significantly more communication technologies ("technophiles") supports Rogers (1983) contention that first adopters are unique.⁹ The two-way interaction between income and education was significant in predicting number of technologies owned. Among the less educated, as might be expected, those with low income were likely to own fewer technologies. Among the higher educated households, however, those with low income were likely to own more technologies. This intriguing finding suggests that those with high education but low income (e.g., academics, social workers, teachers) may own more technologies than those with high education and high income (e.g., doctors, lawyers, MBAs). Although the 10-item communication technology index had a modest Cronbach's alpha (.53), the results provide potential insight for future research regarding the relationship between demographics and technology-haves.

Significant differences were not found between adopters on most attitudinal measures. Nevertheless, the longer the VCR presence, the more likely the expression of attitudes that watching network television is a waste of time but that recording network television is time-efficient. Although this may appear contradictory, it makes sense that viewers who were concerned about wasting time would view the VCR as a time-saving device. Additionally, because all adopters were very satisfied with their VCR, there is no evidence to suggest that Rogers' (1983) notion of discontinuance applies to the VCR. This conclusion contradicts the notion by Lindstrom (1989) that the VCR's impact is likely to be waning.

Adopters differ on several behavioral measures. Evidence from this study supports the notion of socioelites as first adopters; these selective elites may eschew mass appeal television fare. The longer the VCR presence, the less likely adopters

were to watch soap operas and hour-long dramas. Length of VCR ownership was positively correlated with commercial avoidance behaviors. If these behaviors are learned over time with the VCR, and commercial methods are perfected to measure it, then the implications for advertiser-supported television are great. Length of VCR ownership was positively correlated with the use of a remote to change channels during broadcast commercials; the longer the VCR presence, the more likely respondents were to use the remote control to avoid commercials. If this is a learned behavior, then more commercial avoidance behaviors may be expected in the future, to the detriment of advertiser-supported broadcasting. No relationship was found between length of VCR presence and hours of television viewing. Although Lindstrom (1989) found that earliest VCR adopters in May 1987 were heavier viewers of television in general, this inconsistency between findings may reflect differences between measurement techniques.

Given the findings that first adopters were more selective in their viewing, and that they felt recording network television was time-efficient, it makes sense that they were also more likely to record. A key finding of this study was that the longer the VCR was in the home, the greater the reported frequency of various recording behaviors such as recording a program while watching a different program, while not at home, or while asleep. Nielsen data also showed heavier recording use in earlier adopting households (Lindstrom, 1989). The evidence supports the proposition that VCR recording use increases over time as the adopter gains familiarity with the technology. Another finding was that the longer the VCR presence, the more likely adopters were to record sports programs, news shows, and public television.

The differences in recording behaviors is in contrast to the lack of differences in cassette rental behaviors. The newest adopters rent cassettes as frequently as first adopters. Although Lindstrom (1989) found differences in 1984 and 1985 regarding the number of tapes rented based on length of ownership, his 1987 data corroborated the lack of differences among VCR adopting groups in our study. These results support the proposition that newest adopters (who are more likely than first adopters to be "technophobes") may be more interested in the technically simpler playback function of the VCR than the more complex recording function. An alternate explanation is that all VCR adopters may have been at a heightened state of rental activity based on the rapid growth of video outlets, the increasing number of titles available, and decreasing rental costs up to the time of the survey.

Our results support Potter et al.'s (1988) contention that VCR adopters should not be thought of as a monolithic group. Future new media research ought to include the time dimension, that is, length of technology presence in the adopting unit. Aggregate studies are useful but inadequate in portraying the dynamics of adoption. It should not be assumed, for example, that a newest adopter of a video-on-demand service, a picture-in-picture video monitor, or videotex service would use the innovation in ways similar to earlier adopters of those same technologies. More attention should be directed at time-sensitive research techniques and efforts to encourage longitudinal research.

In general, the results suggest that length of VCR presence may explain specific behaviors more than it explains attitudes about the VCR. Adopters tend to express very positive attitudes about their machines regardless of time of adoption. VCR adopters, however, differ in viewing and recording behaviors based on time of

adoption. Because first adopters are probably more familiar with the various functions of the device, they use them more than later adopters. This supports previous research on innovativeness that indicates earlier adopters are also more technically-oriented.

In sum, behavioral differences based upon length of VCR presence may be explained by familiarity with the technology. No support is found for the concept of discontinuance as it relates to the VCR. VCR adopters clearly have not rejected the innovation, and instead may find more uses over time. Although newest VCR adopters were less likely to record tapes than earlier adopters, familiarity may cause the newest adopters to "reinvent" the way they use the VCR by recording more. Although we cannot reject the "continuance" null hypothesis in all conditions, we can reject it in many of the situations we compared because differences were found between VCR adopting groups by length of VCR presence.

Endnotes

1. Sparkes and Kang (1986) is a notable exception in the area of cable television diffusion.

2. A meta-analysis of current VCR research is in progress by one of the authors.

3. The small sample was appropriate for the authors' employment of Q methodology.

4. A. C. Nielsen Company, whose data Lindstrom used, has been criticized for its sampling techniques (e.g., Heighton, 1989).

5. Marketing researchers have been fascinated by new product adoption by innovators (Midgley and Dowling, 1978; Gatignon and Robertson, 1985).

6. Self-report measures were used. Although there are acknowledged weaknesses with such measures, this method of survey research provides the most efficient way to collect data from a large sample of respondents in a community. Furthermore, both marketing and government policy decisions rely on similar self-report research.

7. In survey research, unequal n often results from the nature of the population. The four groups here are relatively similar in size and the sample size is sufficiently large to permit a one-way between subjects analysis of variance which is relatively robust with unequal cell sizes (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1989).

8. Although both variables were ordinal level, the Pearson correlation was used instead of Spearman Rho because the Pearson is more conservative (Gravetter & Wallnau,

1985). Also, the length of ownership data resembled interval level data, and verbal frequency responses are often treated as interval level data.

9. In our study 28% of the VCR adopters were designated as first adopters. These respondents represent 16% of all households including non-adopters. This group would include the 5-10% of the population Rogers (1986) has suggested may be the first to adopt each new communication technology.

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Table 1

Association Between Length of Household VCR Presence
and Other New Technologies

"Please tell me if anyone in your household owns the following items:"

Technologies	Length of VCR Presence				χ^2
	First 3+ years n=164 28.3%	Early 2-3 years n=126 21.8%	Recent 1-2 years n=142 24.5%	Newest < 1 year n=147 25.4%	
Number of TV Sets (mean)	2.67	2.64	2.32	2.19	36.4***
Number of VCRs (mean)	1.39	1.17	1.11	1.04	54.2***
Cable Television	82.9%	87.3%	81.0%	70.1%	14.29**
Pay Cable	39.0%	37.3%	31.7%	23.8%	9.48*
TV Remote Control	78.0%	79.4%	77.5%	74.1%	1.19
Personal Computer	37.2%	30.2%	25.4%	22.4%	9.41*
Phone Answering Machine	25.6%	18.4%	19.7%	16.3%	4.61
Compact Disk Player	22.0%	16.7%	12.0%	9.5%	10.83*
Stereo TV Set	34.1%	23.0%	27.0%	20.4%	8.52*
Video Camera	22.0%	13.5%	4.9%	4.1%	32.31*

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Note: Yes was coded as 1 and no was coded as 2. Degrees of freedom = 3. Responses to stereo TV set ownership may reflect respondent confusion because stereo TV penetration nationally was around 7% at the time of the survey.

Table 2

Analysis of Variance of Technology Ownership by Length of VCR Ownership,
Education and Income

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F
Main Effects				
Ownership	116.33	3	38.78	15.26***
Education	4.98	2	2.49	0.98
Income	45.43	2	22.72	8.94***
2-Way Interactions				
Ownership X Education	16.47	6	2.75	1.08
Ownership X Income	12.97	6	2.16	0.85
Education X Income	28.38	4	7.10	2.79*
3-Way Interactions				
Ownership X Education X Income	34.87	12	2.91	1.14
Explained	295.74	35	8.45	3.32***
Residual	1056.77	416	2.54	

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Table 3

Association Between Length of Household VCR Presence and VCR Attitudes

	Length of VCR Presence				χ^2
	First 3+ years	Early 2-3 years	Recent 1-2 years	Newest < 1 year	
ATTITUDES:	n=164	n=126	n=142	n=147	
Percent agreeing that watching network television was a waste of time	28%	27%	17%	19%	7.86*
Percent strongly agreeing that recording network television was time-efficient	33%	23%	15%	12%	12.46**
* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001					

Table 4

Pearson Correlations between Self-Reported Frequency of Watching or Recording
Television Program Genres and Length of VCR Presence

	WATCH n=579	RECORD n=410
<u>Program Genres</u>	<u>r value</u>	<u>r value</u>
Sitcoms	.000	.047
Hour Dramas	-.078*	.017
Soap Operas	-.123**	.053
Sports	.065	.166***
Local News	-.005	.106*
Network News	-.044	.117**
News Magazines	.067	.164***
Game Shows	-.013	-.022
Movies	-.003	.011
Late Talk Shows	.009	.039
Public TV Shows	.020	.107*

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

NOTE: Regularly was recoded as 4, occasionally as 3, rarely as 2 and never as 1.
Length of VCR presence was coded < 1 year as 1, 1 to < 2 years as 2, 2 to < 3 years
as 3, and 3 + years as 4.

Table 5

Association Between Length of Household VCR Presence and VCR Behaviors

	Length of VCR Presence				χ^2
	First 3+ years	Early 2-3 years	Recent 1-2 years	Newest < 1 year	
BEHAVIORS:	n=86	n=104	n=90	n=130	
Percent who record television shows	80%	72%	73%	58%	17.6***
Percent who plan to record more in the coming year	18%	23%	20%	33%	17.3**

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

NOTE: The N for VCR owners dropped from 579 to 410 when the filter question "Do you use your VCR to record?" was asked.

THE VIDEO NEWS RELEASE:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INFORMATION SUBSIDY

by

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THE VIDEO NEWS RELEASE:

AN ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INFORMATION SUBSIDY

In the late 1980's technologies converged to offer television news organizations timely, electronic news releases, better known as video news releases (VNRs). With the convergence came a sudden growth in the production and distribution of VNRs. Recent VNRs have featured such subjects as Exxon's cleanup of the Valdez oil spill and the 30th anniversary of Silly Putty. Consumer and medical topics are especially popular. One VNR distributor (Harden, 1989, October 10) claimed 76 million viewers in August, 1989, watched NBC, ABC, CBS, CNN and PBS as well as stations across the country transmit a VNR showing the president of Colombia describing his country's war on drugs.

The development of VNRs tended to meet the theoretical criteria of useful information subsidies set by Gandy and others concerned with who sets the agenda of the media. Bartlett (1973) described subsidized information as a reduction of the prices faced by others for certain information in order to increase its consumption. Gandy (1982) contended that news sources enter into an exchange of value with journalists in which the sources reduce the costs of news work to increase their control over news content. Gandy says journalists tend to use information subsidies that can be easily converted into stories that can be published or presumably broadcast. These useful subsidies tend to be timely and inexpensive for journalists.

How have VNRs developed to be more timely, inexpensive and useful as stories? In response has the extent of VNR use increased? What criticisms have arisen about the use of VNRs and their impact on the editorial process?

Development of VNRs

At least since the late 1950's (Kleinfield, 1989) public relations agencies and corporate public relations departments have distributed free film clips or videotapes to television newsrooms. Some of the early ones showed Braniff painting its airplanes bright colors and Kodak bestowing an award for the college football coach of the year. Later Hollywood studios used VNRs to promote movies. Distribution usually depended upon postal delivery. So a VNR was unable to effectively deal with a breaking, major news story because mail delivery would delay the distribution of the video to the point that it had no news value of timeliness.

During the 1980's as local television stations began erecting more and more satellite dishes, public relations outlets started delivering VNRs via satellite (Rothenberg, 1990a). The method was less expensive, more efficient and quicker than postal delivery. However, notification of a satellite feed remained inefficient. Although some distributors contacted stations by phone or teletype, notification still depended heavily on the

mail. Distributors solved the problem (Spayde, 1990) by notifying stations of VNR satellite feeds via high-speed wire services, such as AP Express and PR Newswire, already serving newsrooms. The new efficiency of delivery and notification satisfied Gandy's criterion of timeliness.

Gandy's expense criterion was no concern for television journalists. VNRs had always been free. However, with satellites distribution costs decreased as much as 75 percent less than the cost of postal distribution (Hinds, 1987) making VNRs more attractive for those initiating information subsidies. Spayde (1990) said distribution costs could exceed \$10,000 for 100 videotapes as compared to a fee of between \$4,000 and \$6,000 to notify 700 stations and distribute a VNR to them by satellite. Kleinfield (1989) reported that firms charge clients from \$8,000 to \$40,000 to produce and distribute VNRs. Davis (1989) compared \$5,000 to \$15,000 dollars to produce a VNR to more than \$100,000 a minute for prime time ads.

Gandy said an information subsidy in a news context is more credible than an ad. Hinds (1987) suggested that special interests through public relations practitioners seek to infiltrate news programs because consumers do not respond to ads.

VNRs themselves grew more sophisticated and tuned to the preferences of news producers. After all, many VNR producers were former news professionals who knew what their former colleagues preferred (Spayde, 1990). From an editorial viewpoint

VNRs could not be obvious attempts to persuade or promote a special interest (Tyler, 1989). Instead, they were more successful if they provided straightforward information, as Turk (1986) found with information subsidies to newspapers.

From a production viewpoint as well as an editorial viewpoint many VNRs provided new flexibility by adding selected raw footage of interviews and B-Roll to offerings of self-contained packages. The packages were easy to use, but alone provided little flexibility. Producers had to accept the given time of the package, refuse the package, or try to re-edit it under awkward circumstances. A package is a television news term for a complete, edited report including interviews and video narrated by a reporter. B-roll is a television news term for only the video used in a package.

The additional flexibility and the other improvements in editorial and production quality met Gandy's criterion of being easily converted into a useful story. The flexibility also met Berkowitz's (1990) findings that one consideration for the selection of television news content was that information could be easily assembled with efficiency. A Nielsen survey tended to confirm the notion. Almost 69 percent of 121 news directors surveyed preferred VNRs that included a combination of package and B-roll. More than 21 percent favored B-Roll only (Harden, 1990).

Berkowitz also found that the structure of the newscast format had almost as much to do with story selection as did news

values. In the 1980's format demands grew. Many local stations expanded early evening newscasts and added early morning newscasts (Jacobs, 1990). Local stations relied less on their networks and more on their own resources and new satellite networks to cover national news (Puglisi, 1988; Lacy, Atwater and Powers, 1988). VNRs could fill a need for local stations by providing material for the expanded formats.

A different type of VNR evolved to fit another format need for more live material such as the live, satellite interview in the style of ABC's "Nightline" with local anchors asking questions of celebrities, corporate executives or politicians. Satellite interviews and news conferences could quickly respond to stations needs for timely material. In September, 1989, Medialink, one of the major distributors of VNRs via satellite, boasted that it set up a satellite news conference within four hours after the announcement of a court decision about the winner of the 1988 America's Cup (Harden, 1989, September 27).

The Extent of VNR Use

Distributors have successfully promoted VNRs to a variety of publics ranging from health care professionals to the insurance industry to the legal profession (Perry, 1989; Dauer, 1990; Herman, 1988). Publicity releases about VNR successes have been reported by such publications as The Wall Street Journal,

Fortune, The New York Times and even Journalism Quarterly ("Video news releases," 1990; Farnham, 1989; Rothenberg, 1990b; "Video news releases show impact," 1989). Among the publicity releases with the most impact have been those describing the extent of the use of VNRs by local television news directors. Nevertheless, there is conflicting information about the extent of VNR use.

What Proportion of Stations Use VNRs?

Nielsen Media Research regularly conducts telephone surveys for Medialink and reported that 78 percent of 121 responding news directors said their newscasts included edited material from an average of one VNR each week; 32 percent used two or more per week (Harden, 1990, February 22). In a similar survey a year earlier the once-a-week figure was 75 percent (VandeWater, 1989), and in early 1987 it was 62.5 percent (Sugawara, 1987).

Contrast the Nielsen results with a McHugh and Hoffman (1988) survey commissioned by Sun World Satellite News which reported that there was little indication that news managers regularly used VNRs. It found that only 13 percent of the responding news managers used VNRs weekly or more often. Two-thirds said they used VNRs seldom or not at all.

Different perceptions of the exact use of VNRs could account for at least portions of the discrepancy. A television news organization is likely to be selective about its use of information subsidies (Abbott and Brassfield, 1989; Berkowitz, 1989). The Nielsen survey specifically mentioned such

selectivity, edited VNRs. However, the McHugh and Hoffman report made no mention of whether the VNR was edited or used in its entirety.

So perhaps a more meaningful question is: What proportion of stations are using VNRs as creators would presumably prefer -- as packages without editing? Another Nielsen survey (Sugawara, 1987) of 68 news producers reported that 27 percent said they had run at least one entire video press release in the previous week. Of those, most used one or two, although three stations said they used three videotapes in full. Two used five, and one used ten in one week. It is this kind of unedited use that concerns critics most.

Some public relations practitioners seem concerned about the validity of measuring the extent of VNR use. In the last two years the Public Relations Journal published three articles skeptical of VNR use reports (Rubin, 1989; Davids, 1988; "VNR Update," 1989). One used the term "outright fraud" (Davids, p. 15) to describe reports of VNR use by some distributors. Other use reports were described as confusing and misleading. Davids noted another problem: news directors claimed they never used sponsored material when reporters and producers reported use. Clark (1990) discovered a similar problem. Medialink research claimed that WLS-TV in Chicago broadcast excerpts from six VNRs during the last five months of 1989. The WLS news director denied that they came from Medialink saying one came

directly from a public relations firm. Another came from ABC. Nevertheless Medialink claimed credit for them. Such incidents and the conflicting results of the McHugh and Hoffman survey raise questions about the validity of survey research of the extent of VNR use.

Perhaps content oriented research would be more valid, but monitoring hundreds of newscasts throughout the country would be formidable. At one time there appeared to be a technical solution to the difficulty of monitoring VNR use (Davids, 1988). Medialink and Nielsen had devised a system called Sigma which encoded video with an identifying number invisible to viewers, but detectable by special sensors designed to reliably monitor VNR use. However, time base correcting, an electronic procedure essential to broadcasting video cassettes, ruined the code (Murrie, 1990). So use of the system was suspended.

What Kinds of Stations and Programs Use VNRs?

A discussion of the extent of use must also consider the quality of stations and programs using VNRs as well as the quantity. Conventional wisdom assumes that small stations use VNRs most because they are most likely to be economically pressed and need the free material (Hinds, 1987; Sugawara, 1987; Kleinfield, 1989; Rothenberg, 1989; Clark, 1990). However, McHugh and Hoffman's study reported that stations in the Eastern time zone and large markets were more likely to say they use at least one video news release per day. Another aspect of the

extent of use takes into account the time and type of program using the VNR. The McHugh and Hoffman (1988) study reported a tendency to use handout material in noon and early morning newscasts. They tend to have smaller audiences than evening newscasts. So a station tends to devote its resources less to them.

New kinds of programs and syndicated services have started to use VNRs. For example, West Glen Communications recycled old VNRs and packaged them into a 30-minute program called "Health and Home Report" distributed free to cable systems who wanted non-commercial, consumer-oriented programming. The program consisted of eight to ten VNRs and public service announcements. Companies with old VNRs paid West Glen to use the VNRs in its programs (Glink, 1988).

In late 1989 Transcontinental Television, a new company in which Capital Cities/ABC owns an interest, began transmitting VNRs by satellite to ABC's 213 affiliates. The transmission preceded the network's daily news feeds to affiliates. Some news executives criticized the move as damaging to ABC news integrity (Rothenberg, 1989). However, the director of the news feed contended that the new transmission segregated VNRs (Dolan, 1990) from the news feed. Another ABC executive said the network was not endorsing VNRs, but only making satellite time available to transmit them. A Transcontinental executive said employees of the affiliate news service will screen the VNRs for acceptability before they are transmitted. Rothenberg (1989) added that public

relations executives predicted the association of ABC with the new VNR feed would increase VNR usage.

Criticisms of VNRs

Critics describe VNRs as news stories that blend smoothly into news programs while subtly selling products or advocating a point of view. Criticisms can be summarized by three arguments: (1) VNRs tend to be misleading; (2) the use of VNRs surrenders editorial control; (3) news sources use VNRs as substitutes for being accessible.

VNRs Tend to Mislead Viewers

The Radio-Television News Directors Association Code of Ethics code requires members to "guard against using audio or video material in a way that deceives the audience" (Yoakam and Cremer, 1989, p. 401). Yet critics argue that VNRs deceive audiences by purporting to be objective news stories when they are carefully tailored messages from special interests.

Consumer advocate Ralph Nader is such a critic. He advocated that the Food and Drug Administration, the Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Communications Commission investigate VNR practices because they cross the line between programming and advertising without disclosing it to the public.

Hinds (1987) illustrated the deception criticism with the

example of a VNR showing an 11-year-old girl reenacting an asthma attack after she switched to a generic drug from a name-brand drug. Although the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America sponsored the production of the VNR, Key Pharmaceuticals, a contributor to the foundation and the maker of a brand-name drug that received favorable mention in the tape, paid production costs. The message that generic drugs can be less safe than brand-name drugs at the time was contrary to the Federal Food and Drug Administration position. Twenty-three stations broadcast the tape to an estimated 1.3 million viewers. National officers of the foundation found the tape to be unbalanced and requested that it be recalled, but the producing agency declined to do so because it believed the VNR had run its course and no stations were likely to use it.

Notice that part of the Nader criticism concerns disclosure of the VNR. Just as the journalist's practice of attribution identifies a source of information, identification of the source of a VNR can be a key consideration about whether a VNR misleads viewers. Such identification can be electronically superimposed on the television screen or included in a reporter's narration. In 1985 (Scharff and Smith) the Radio-Television News Directors Association warned members that FCC rules require identification of the source of video furnished to a station in cases involving political or controversial material. However, two years later a Nielsen study for Medialink reported only 31 percent of the stations surveyed had a policy of identifying the sponsoring

company; 18 percent only identified the company if it was relevant to the story; 12 percent did not identify the sponsor (Sugawara, 1987).

In 1990 (Gold) a similar Nielsen survey of 145 stations reported that 57.2 percent that they regularly identify the source of VNRs, and 36.6 said they did not.

VNRs Surrender Editorial Control

Some news executives and other critics argue that the VNR production process is editorially bankrupt. The news organization has no control over the writing and reporting for the VNR (Murrie, 1990). Critics also view the shooting of the VNR as tainted because the camera selectively views the scene of a news story according to the biases of the VNR sponsor. The journalist has no control over the original gathering of video information. VNR sponsors counter with the argument that they often provide footage that is difficult to obtain (Davis, 1989).

Exxon believed in the editorial influence of the VNR so much that for the first time in its history the company prepared VNRs because executives believed regular news coverage failed to show the positive aspects of the Valdez oil spill cleanup. Major networks did not broadcast the VNRs, but the Independent News Network, Fox and local stations did, providing an estimated audience of almost 30 million people (VandeWater, 1989).

The McHugh and Hoffman survey asked television news managers their opinion of the editorial value of eight types of external

sources of news video. VNRs ranked last with a score of 2.4 as compared with the highest value source, 7.6, for network news feeds.

VNRs could carry even more editorial influence if the ideas of journalism professor/attorney are adopted. Rubin (1989) suggested public relations practitioners start putting restrictions on their VNRs to guard against subsequent use that would put a client in an unfavorable light. She suggested restrictions such as labeling VNRs for news and public affairs use only. That restriction raises the questions of whether a restricted VNR could be used for a newscast promotional commercial. Rubin also recommended time limits. VNRs about Academy Award and Grammy awards already carry strict limits on when stations can use VNRs to enable union and network clearance. Rubin even suggested context restrictions, although she acknowledged that such restrictions might open new charges of managing the news.

Substitute for Access

Some news executives (Davis, 1989; VandeWater, 1989; Murrie, 1990) argue that an unchallenged VNR fails to offer the same quality of access to news sources as taking questions from reporters. These critics suggest some companies and other interests see VNRs as fulfilling their obligation to be accountable to the public.

Despite denials, the timing of Medialink's most-watched VNR of 1988 seemed to serve as an example of the critics' contentions. It featured Drexel Burnham Lambert chief executive Frederick H. Joseph reacting to a \$650-million settlement of securities law violations with the U.S. attorney's office in New York. The agreement was announced at 5:30 p.m. making it impossible to arrange interviews in time for evening newscasts. The VNR was widely used by all major networks (Kleinfield, 1989). A Drexel spokesman said Joseph was not ducking the press. He made the video because he was too busy to do interviews or hold a press conference (Vandewater, 1989).

Discussion/Conclusions

VNRs have succeeded as information subsidies as they have become more timely in their distribution and in their ability to follow breaking news, less expensive and more effective for their sponsors, and more useful as television news stories due to improvements in their editorial slant and news production quality and flexibility.

Use of VNRs has increased in the 1980's, but there is limited, confusing information about the extent of the increase. Has increased use been confined to highly selective instances, or has it been more general? Has the increase occurred primarily on newscasts with relatively few viewers or on higher profile

evening newscasts as well? Has increased use been confined primarily to financially weak stations desperate to fill inexpensive news programs, or have more wealthy stations found VNRs to be of adequate quality to use regularly?

Survey methods have been used to measure the extent of VNR use. However, confusing survey results and contradictions about specific cases of VNR use indicate that news directors may not necessarily know, recall or care whether newscast video comes from a VNR. Surveys of newscast producers or others integrally involved in the production of individual newscasts might be more valid than surveys of news directors. A more content oriented VNR monitoring system could be even more valid, but potentially unwieldy and impractical. An electronic content monitoring system is under development. It seems to show the potential to be valid, reliable and manageable and should be pursued.

Critics of VNRs say they can mislead viewers, control both written and visual information before it reaches television news organizations, and bypass the inquiry of a reporter.

Certainly all of these criticisms have merit. However, one could make similar criticisms of other information subsidies, especially print news releases.

Do VNRs disguise themselves as regular news stories? If so, so do other information subsidies in other media. For example, Turk (1986) found that eight newspapers in Louisiana published half of the information subsidies from six state agencies. A solution to misleading VNRs is the same solution journalists have

used for years to deal with biased information -- attribution. To counter the possibilities for misleading viewers, television news practitioners can resolve -- both individually and through professional organizations such as the Radio Television News Directors Association -- to attribute video from outside sources as it is being shown, especially when it involves a controversial or commercial topic. Such attribution should clearly identify the organization that paid for the production and distribution of the video, not a mediating organization that may have received a donation to produce the VNR.

Other information subsidies as well as VNRs can filter information before it reaches news organizations. Television news practitioners can take two steps to counter this criticism. First, they can refuse to use VNR packages in their entirety. Second, news practitioners can also resolve to balance any VNR video and associated information by seeking video, as well as information, representing contrasting views.

News sources have long tried to bypass questioning by reporters of all media by offering a carefully worded statements. The tactic is not peculiar to VNR suppliers. The only difference is the form. The carefully worded statement is usually written for reading or distribution. The VNR records the carefully worded statement on videotape. To balance such information subsidies reporters can go to other sources. Public relations practitioners can advise clients of the necessity of being accessible to news inquiries. Turk (1986) found evidence

indicating that organizations adopting a public information or two-way model of public relations behavior rather than a self-serving, press agency/publicity model might be more successful in placing information subsidies. Such a two-way model would, of course, include the opportunity to freely question the source of any information subsidy. Public relations practitioners can also encourage the use of two-way satellite interviews or other interactive formats rather than one-way distributions of VNRs. News practitioners can resolve to refuse VNRs from inaccessible sources, or at least disclose in news stories that sources refused to be questioned.

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Survey of News Managers' Usage of Handout Video

<u>Usage</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Daily	0
Three times a week	3
Weekly	10
Bi-weekly	10
Monthly	12
Bi-monthly	4
Seldom	39
Never	22

Source: McHugh and Hoffman, Inc. (1988) Summary of Essential Findings and Recommendations for Sun World Satellite News

ISSUE AND IMAGE DISTINCTIONS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS
TO STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF POLITICAL
ADVERTISEMENTS FOR 1988 PRESIDENTIAL
CANDIDATES BUSH AND DUKAKIS

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ABSTRACT

This study compares issue and image ads from the 1988 American Presidential general election. Eighty-one ads were content analyzed in terms of production and content components. Compared to structural findings on 1980 ads, 1988 ad findings indicate issue ads are more sophisticated in production techniques and less candidate directed, while image ads are more candidate directed in their presentation. Predominant content remained the same in 1980 and 1988 issue and image ads, though 1988 issue ads show a greater increase in image components used than the increase in issue components used in 1988 image ads.

These shifts in issue and image ads may be attributable to: 1) increases in negative issue ads; 2) increases in news-like formats for issue ads; 3) the shift from issue to image ads as the candidate's forum for direct address to voters; 4) increases in use of issue ads to deliver image information.

Introduction

Questions about issues and images in politics and their effects on the political system as a whole have received particular attention during and after the years of the Reagan Presidency. Of special concern have been the questions of issue and image distinctions in televised political advertising, as candidates have increased their reliance on political ads to deliver messages. However, research considering the uses and effects of these two categories of political ads has been inconclusive. In order to definitively explore voters' uses or the effects of issue and image ads, clear definitions must be constructed; this paper seeks to clarify such definitions by exploring and constructing definitions of issue and image ads based on 1988 Presidential general election ads. However, the definitions described here may be as sensitive to the changes in the electoral environment as those offered by past scholars. Thus, no holistic and timeless definition can be created for issue and image ads, but comparisons of time-bound definitions may illuminate important shifts in the political system.

The most thorough work on this subject has been completed by Leonard Shyles, who looked at political ads from the 1980 American presidential primaries. He investigated 140 political ads' presentational methods to find issue and image distinctions. Shyles employed a Delphi panel to determine the words and phrases used in 35 commercials that provided issue and image references. Three coders noted these references and determined a composite

score for each ad. Based on these scores, the ads were categorized as either issue or image ads. Several differences between issue and image ads were found by Shyles. Issue ads were straight-forward, with candidates speaking directly to the camera while in formal dress. Image ads were less straight-forward and were more "slickly-packaged;" still-pictures of the candidates were used, often narrated by others (announcers, citizens) and accompanied by music.¹ In another paper on the same ads, Shyles found image presentations to be negatively associated with direct candidate address to the camera, either visually or verbally.² Another scholar, Gina Garramone described issue ads as featuring the candidate head-on, explaining her/his policies, with relatively little emphasis on sophisticated production techniques. The image ads, on the other hand, described the personal qualities of the candidate, sometimes by voice-over or testimonial, or by directly showing the candidate displaying these favorable qualities. The focus of image ads, in contrast to the word-oriented issue ads, was on the visual images obtained

¹Leonard Shyles, "The Relationship of Images, Issues and Presentational Methods in Televised Spot Advertisements for 1980's American Presidential Primaries," Journal of Broadcasting, Vol. 28:4 (1984), p. 418.

²Leonard Shyles, "The Televised Political Spot Advertisement," in New Perspectives on Political Advertising, eds. Lynda L. Kaid, Dan Nimmo, and Keith Sanders (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), pp. 126.

through complex production techniques.³

In discussing the impact of his findings, Shyles has stated, "there are measurable regularities in the structure of televised political advertising which uniquely accompany symbolic content in the communication of images of candidate or campaign issues to the electorate." Indeed, through Shyles' work and Garramone's definitions there appear to be structures and content that can be discussed as typical of issue and image ads. However, this previous work is limited in its scope. Shyles has noted the weaknesses of his studies as: 1) focus on the semantic (verbal and textual) rather than the video portion of the ad and 2) limited sample from which to generalize -- political ads from the 1980 presidential primary only.⁴

Focus of Study

This study considers 81 political ads from the 1988 American Presidential general election. Similar to Shyles's exploration of the 1980 political ads, this exploratory study sought to find "measurable regularities" in the structure and content of political ads along the issue/image distinction. In contrast to Shyles's work, this study examines both structural components and

³Gina M. Garramone, "Candidate Image Formation: The Role of Information Processing," in New Perspectives on Political Advertising, eds. Lynda Lee Kaid, Dan Nimmo, and Keith Sanders (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), p. 240.

⁴Shyles (1986), pp. 134 & 137-138.

ent of ads, with a particular emphasis on the video portion of the ads. This sample from the 1988 election offers a more generalizable sample to general elections than that offered by Shyles. Further, this work provides 1988 contrasts to Shyles's 1980 assessment of issue and image structure of political ads illuminating shifts in the political environment.

Functions/Perceptions of Issue and Image Political Advertisements

Paid political commercials allow candidates to present their "own vision of themselves, the campaign, their opponent, and their political mission" to the voters.⁵ Efforts to use appeals and messages to persuade the electorate have been a part of the American political system since its beginnings.⁶ However, many types of mass media messages are perceived as having debilitating effects on the American political system; for example, political television ads are thought by some to be less informative, offering emotional image information about candidates rather than offering clear issue information to voters. Many scholars claim that voters relying on image information are unsophisticated, unlike those basing their decisions on issue information. As

⁵Anne Johnston and Anne Barton White, "Communication Styles and Female Candidates: A Study of the Strategies Used in Political Advertising During the 1986 Senate Elections," A paper presented at the Broadcast Educators Association conference, Las Vegas, Nevada. 27-29 April 1989, p. 3.

⁶Kathleen H. Jamieson, "Evolution of Political Advertising in America," in New Perspectives on Political Advertising, eds. Lynda L. Kaid, Dan Nimmo, and Keith Sanders (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), pp. 1-20.

McLeod, Glynn, and McDonald have stated, "The [electoral choices based on the issue positions of candidates are] seen as a more rational and cognitively based strategy in contrast to the less rational and affectively determined choices based on images."⁷ A dichotomy exists in the minds of some lay persons and scholars between issue oriented and image oriented information seekers that favors voter choices based on issues.

However, communication and political research has indicated voters may prefer image messages to issue messages in making their electoral decisions.⁸ Rosenberg and McCafferty have found visual appearance of candidates to be important in determining the voter's image of the candidate, in turn, this candidate image is important in forming voter preference.⁹ McLeod and colleagues have found voters television-reliant voters use candidate image characteristics in making their political decisions more than do newspaper-reliant voters.¹⁰ Husson, Stephen, Harrison, and Fehr have determined that voters define the personal images of candidates in terms of candidate behaviors and that these

⁷Jack M. McLeod, Carroll J. Glynn, and Daniel G. McDonald, "Issues and Images: The Influence of Media Reliance in Voting Decisions," Communication Research, 10, (1983), p. 39.

⁸Susan A. Hellweg, George N. Dionisopoulos, and Drew B. Kugler, "Political Candidate Image: A State-of-the-Art Review," in Progress in Communication Sciences, Vol. IX, eds. Brenda Dervin and Melvin J. Voigt (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1989), pp. 43-78.

⁹Shawn Rosenberg and Patrick McCafferty, "The Image and the Vote: Manipulating Voters' Preferences," Public Opinion Quarterly, 51, (1987), pp. 31-47.

¹⁰McLeod, et al., p. 37.

behavioral images are predictive of preferences for those candidates.¹¹ Some scholarly voices champion image-based voter decision making, such as the Albany, New York blue-collar workers' use of image information in their choice for President. Kendall and Yum have stated:

The blue-collar voter apparently selects a president in much the same way one selects friends, noting their personal qualities and beliefs and attitudes. . . . Who is to say that such a basis for judgment is any worse than a judgment based on campaign issues in the mysterious game of predicting future presidential behavior on a wide range of issues?¹²

Though the distinction between issue and image in political advertising persists, the lines of demarcation are not as clear or stable over time as might be advantageous for academic research purposes. Some scholars have explored this distinction with sensitivity to this delicate relationship. Gina Garramone has focused on the importance of the individual's mode of processing political information as the primary determinant of the viewer's retention of political messages. She has tested the agenda-setting effects on viewers of political ads to attend to

¹¹William Husson, Timothy Stephen, Teresa M. Harrison, and B.J. Fehr, "An Interpersonal Communication Perspective on Images of Political Candidates," Human Communication Research, 14, (1988), p. 419.

¹²Kathleen E. Kendall and June Ock Yum, "Persuading the Blue-Collar Voter: Issues, Images, and Homophily," in Communication Yearbook 8, eds. R.N. Bostrom and B.H. Westley (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1984), p. 719.

either issue or image information. Garramone has found those individuals in the issue-motivated group were more likely to learn candidate issue stands and be confident about issue information than those learning about the personalities of candidates. Those individuals attending to personality information were more likely to infer these traits from information in the commercial rather than trying to determine how traits were related, as issue motivated individuals did.¹³

Robert Rudd has examined the use of "issue" commercials to develop a candidate's image in a political campaign. He described one campaign's efforts to use six "issue" areas to build a positive image for the candidate in terms of basic human and social values, personality, and leadership.¹⁴ Allan Loudon's study of the negative ads in the 1984 North Carolina Senate (Hunt-Helms) race has found negative issue ads more effective in creating negative evaluations of an opponent's character than negative image ads.¹⁵ The work of Garramone, Rudd, and Loudon suggest the very definitions of issue and image

¹³Gina M. Garramone, "Issue versus Image Orientation and Effects of Political Advertising," Communication Research, 10, (1983), pp. 72-73.

¹⁴Robert Rudd, "Issues as Image in Political Campaign Commercials," Western Journal of Speech Communication, 50 (1986), p. 102.

¹⁵Allan D. Loudon, "Transformation of Issue to Image and Presence Eliciting Character Evaluations in Negative Spot Advertising," A paper presented at the International Communication Association conference, Dublin, Ireland. 24-29 June 1990, pp. 1-36.

ads must be seen as variable and responsive to the electorate's expectations for what "issue" and "image" information is.

Definitions of "Issue" and "Image"

Most of the findings on advertising effects have used varying definitions of issue and image ads. In order to explore the structural differences of these ads, the definitions of these terms as they have been used in political advertising research should be considered. "Issue" commercials have a clear meaning in the literature: they "address specific policy questions, such as taxes or defense."¹⁶ However, the meaning of "image" in reference to political commercials has been far more muddled. Shyles has noted the variable definition of image; he has described that some define image as a "visual impression, a graphic representation," while others see image as referring to "the character attributes of candidates" or the "candidate's perceived or projected cluster of personality traits and not the audiovisual appearance of the candidate."¹⁷ Rudd has blended the definition of image to include both the candidate's personal characteristics as well as leadership qualities.¹⁸ McCombs and Gilbert have found the critical element of candidate image for

¹⁶Rudd, p. 102.

¹⁷Shyles, (1984), p. 406.

¹⁸Rudd, p. 102.

the voter to be name recognition.¹⁹ Margaret Latimer's study of newspaper campaign ads from the 1982 Alabama state senate races has defined "personality images" in contrast to issues.²⁰

Garramone has defined candidate image "as the sum of the perceived personal and professional characteristics of the candidate." M. Argyle, as quoted by Bull and Hawkes, has offered a very rich definition of image:

This public image is derived partly from real events in his career, partly from the impression he gives in television and in person, and it is partly the result of impression-management by his public relations experts.²¹

In this study, ads were judged by the coders to be either an issue or image ad depending on an holistic evaluation (both visual and auditory components) of the ads. Issue ads were defined as relating primarily to policy and issue concerns, while image ads focused on the candidate's perceived grouping of personality traits.

¹⁹Maxwell McCombs and Sheldon Gilbert, "News Influence on Our Pictures of the World," in Perspectives on Mass Media Effects, eds. Jennings Bryant and Dolf Zillmann (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence, Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1986), p. 10.

²⁰Margaret K. Latimer, "Policy Issues and Personal Images in Political Advertising in a State Election," Journalism Quarterly, 61, (1984), p. 777.

²¹Ray Bull and Caroline Hawkes, "Judging Politicians by Their Faces," Political Studies, 30, (1982), p. 101.

Research Questions

Based on the ambiguity of past research and in an effort to derive some structural and content definitions for issue and image ad distinctions among the 1988 ads, the following research question was proposed:

1) What are the differences in structure and content of political ads categorized as issue ads and image ads in these 1988 ads?

In addition, changes in the structural and content definitions of issue and image ads may signal changes in the political environment. With this in mind, the following question were proposed:

2) How do these 1988 definitions of issue and image ads differ from those found in studies involving 1980 political advertisements? What are the implications of these changes?

Method

In order to determine whether a typology of issue and image ads could be derived, a content analysis was done on the ads of the Presidential candidates in the general election of 1988, George Bush and Michael Dukakis. These ads were obtained from the Political Commercial Archive.²²

²²The Political Commercial Archive is the world's largest collection of political advertising, containing over 30,000 commercials. The Archive was founded by a private collector in 1956 and has been owned by the Political Communication Center in the Department of Communication at the University of Oklahoma since 1985.

The unit of analysis was each individual commercial. The total sample of ads was 81, with 37 ads for Bush and 44 ads for Dukakis. Forty-nine ads were classified as issue ads and 32 as image ads. A standard written coding instrument was used as well as a codebook to explicate the specific categories of coding. Coders were asked to determine several aspects of the construction of the commercials, such as dominant strategies employed or the presence or absence of a strategy.

Codes were established for these specific areas: format of the ads, rhetorical style of the candidate or commercial, presence and nature of negative attacks, content of the appeal of the commercials, production techniques utilized in the ad, setting and dominant speaker in the commercials, and issue/image emphasis of the ads. The commercials were also coded for the presence of strategies and characteristics in the ad, such as "representing the center of the party," "consulting with world leaders," "toughness," and "honesty/integrity."

Three coders, all women, were used to judge the 81 ads on the various dimensions. Coders were instructed on how to use the coding instrument as well as the specifics of the category systems. Coding reliability was assessed by candidate and found to be .79 for the Bush ads and .85 for the Dukakis ads.²³ To

²³ To compute intercoder reliability by candidate, all categories were included except strategies used and characteristics emphasized. It was determined that these categories generated a lower level of agreement than acceptable; if only two of the three coders determined that the characteristic or strategy was emphasized in the ad then it was counted as being part of the ad.

compare the structure of issue and image ads, crosstabs or contingency tables were utilized. For this data, chi-squares were used to test the differences in observed and expected frequencies for the categories, using a significance level of at least .05.

Results

As Table 1 indicates, certain formats and rhetorical styles were uniquely associated with either the issue or image ad category. The most popular format for issue ads was "issue dramatization," used in 46.9 percent of the issue ads. This type of format emphasizes or illustrates some issue or problem in some dramatic way, other than the candidate just speaking about it. The next most popular format in issue ads was "introspection." In this type of ad, the candidate reflects on his/her campaign, job in office, mission as a candidate, or philosophy of government. This format may show only the candidate or include

The formula used to compute reliability was given by Holsti, in R.C. North, O. Holsti, M. Zaninovich, and D.A. Zinnes, Content Analysis: A Handbook with Applications for the Study of International Crisis, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1963). The formula below is given for two coders and can be modified for any number of coders:

$$R = \frac{2(C_{1,1})}{C_1 + C_2}$$

$C_{1,1}$ = # of categories
 assignments both coders
 agree on
 $C_1 + C_2$ = total category assignments
 made by both coders

the candidate speaking to others. Inversely, the most popular format for image ads was the "introspective" format followed by "issue dramatization."

One of the statistically significant differences between issue and image ads was choice of rhetorical style ($p < .0000$). In issue ads, the predominant rhetorical style of the ad or candidate was "informative." The "informative" rhetorical style uses language which seeks to inform or educate viewers about the candidates or an issue; the language includes facts and evidence. The image ads were predominantly "emotional" in their rhetorical style. The rest of the image ads employed the "informative" rhetorical style. Issue ads were more than twice as likely as image ads to be "informative" in rhetorical style, while image ads were almost four times as likely as issue ads to employ an "emotional" rhetorical style.

Table 1

Formats and Styles of Commercials

	Issue (N=49)	Image (N=32)
<u>FORMAT</u>		
Documentary	7 (14.3%)	6 (18.8%)
Bandwagon	3 (6.1%)	6 (18.8%)
Testimonial	2 (4.1%)	1 (3.1%)
Introspection	12 (24.5%)	10 (31.3%)
Opposition Focused	2 (4.1%)	1 (3.1%)
Issue Dramatization	23 (46.9%)	8 (25.0%)
<u>* RHETORICAL STYLE</u>		
Exhortive	11 (22.4%)	0
Bargaining	1 (2.0%)	0
Emotional	11 (22.4%)	25 (78.1%)
Informative	26 (53.1%)	7 (21.9%)

* Chi-square is significant at $p < .0000$

As shown in Table 2, statistically significant differences between issue and image ads on use of appeal types and the dominant type of appeal in the ads were found (all at $p < .0000$). Specifically, almost ninety percent of the issue ads contained "logical" appeals, an appeal which is typified by use of facts in order to persuade the viewer. Almost eighty percent of the issue ads contained "emotional" appeals, and seventy-five percent of the issue ads contained "source credibility" appeals, a type of appeal made to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the candidate. For image ads, almost all the ads contained "emotional" (96.9%) and "source credibility" (93.8%) appeals.

When coders were asked to determine the dominant content of the appeal, most issue ads were found to be "logical" appeals (55.1%), followed by equal numbers of "emotional" and "source credibility" appeals (22.4% each). For image ads, the primary appeals were "emotional" (56.3%) followed by "source credibility" (43.8%). For both the presence and dominance of appeal, both "emotional" and "source credibility" were more likely components of image ads, while "logical" appeals were more a characteristic of issue ads. Though logical appeals were more common in issue ads, fear appeals were also more likely to be present in issue ads (40.8%) than in image ads (21.9%). Similarly, issue ads contained a high presence of emotional appeals.

Table 2

Appeals Made in Ads

	Issue (N=49)	Image (N=32)
<u>USE OF APPEAL TYPES</u>		
* Logical	44 (89.8%)	12 (37.5%)
* Emotional	38 (77.6%)	31 (96.9%)
* Source Credibility	37 (75.5%)	30 (93.8%)
* Chi-square is significant at $p < .0000$		
<u>* DOMINANT TYPE OF APPEAL IN ADS</u>		
Logical	27 (55.1%)	0
Emotional	11 (22.4%)	18 (56.3%)
Source Credibility	11 (22.4%)	14 (43.8%)
* Chi-square is significant at $p < .0000$		
<u>USE OF FEAR APPEALS</u>	20 (40.8%)	7 (21.9%)

Table 3, describing the nonverbal/verbal characteristics of the ads, shows statistically significant differences in production techniques for the issue and image ads. The most frequently used production technique for issue ads was a combination of several production methods (44.9%). The next most popular production techniques for issue ads were "cinema verite" (18.4%) and "candidate head-on" (18.4%). For image ads, the most frequently used production techniques were the combination approach (40.6%) and "cinema verite" (40.6%). The next most likely production technique was the "candidate head-on" (15.6%). The use of "cinema verite" was twice as likely for an image ad than an issue ad, while both image and issue ads were almost equally likely to contain combined production techniques as well as the "candidate head-on."

The most frequently used special effect in issue ads was "computer graphics" (53.1%), followed by the use of "freeze-frame" shots (30.6%; a statistically significant difference of $p < .05$). In image ads, the most popular special effect was "still-photograph" use (46.9%), followed by use of "montage" (40.6%). Special effects were used with slightly greater frequency in image ads than in issue ads.

The predominant setting of the image ads was "informal indoors" (40.6%). The settings of the issue ads were predominantly unable to be determined/not applicable (32.7%), followed by "informal indoors" (26.5%). In the setting of the ad, the combination approach was almost three times as likely to

occur for the image ads as for the issue ads. The dress of candidates in both issue and image ads was primarily "formal."

A statistically significant difference was found between the issue and image ads on the predominant speaker in the ad. In issue ads, the speaker was an "anonymous announcer" (61.2%), followed by the "candidate speaking on his own behalf" (28.6%). In contrast, in image ads the candidate speaks for himself most often (37.5%), followed closely by the "anonymous announcer" (31.8%). Comparing different types of speakers and their frequency in these ads, almost twice as many "government officials" and "anonymous announcers" were used as speakers in issue ads as in image ads. Most of the issue ads (67.3%) used "voice-over sound", while most of the image ads used "live" sound (59.4%). Music was used almost equally present in issue and image ads.

Table 3

Nonverbal/Verbal Characteristics of Commercials

	Issue (N=49)	Image (N=32)
* ¹ <u>PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES</u>		
Cinema verite	9 (18.4%)	13 (40.6%)
Slides with print	7 (14.3%)	0
Candidate head-on	9 (18.4%)	5 (15.6%)
Somebody other than candidate head-on	2 (4.1%)	0
Animation or special production	0	1 (3.1%)
Combination	22 (44.9%)	13 (40.6%)

Table 3 (cont'd)
Nonverbal/Verbal Characteristics of Commercials

	Issue	Image
<u>USE OF SPECIAL EFFECTS</u>		
Computer graphics	26 (53.1%)	12 (37.5%)
Slow motion	14 (28.6%)	11 (34.4%)
Fast motion	1 (2.0%)	0
Reverse motion	0	1 (3.1%)
* Freeze frame	15 (30.6%)	3 (9.4%)
Split screen	0	0
Superimposition	4 (8.2%)	3 (9.4%)
Montage	11 (22.4%)	13 (40.6%)
Stop motion photography	2 (4.1%)	1 (3.1%)
Stills	14 (28.6%)	15 (46.9%)
<u>*¹ SETTING OF AD</u>		
Formal indoors	8 (16.3%)	5 (15.6%)
Informal indoors	13 (26.5%)	13 (40.6%)
Formal outdoors	1 (2.0%)	0
Informal outdoors	6 (12.2%)	3 (9.4%)
Combination	5 (10.2%)	9 (28.1%)
Not applicable/can't be determined	16 (32.7%)	2 (6.3%)
<u>*² DRESS</u>		
Formal	25 (51.0%)	16 (50.0%)
Casual	3 (6.1%)	6 (18.8%)
Varied/Combination	1 (2.0%)	7 (21.9%)
Not applicable	20 (40.8%)	3 (9.4%)
<u>*¹ SPEAKER</u>		
Candidate	14 (28.6%)	12 (37.5%)
Government official	3 (6.1%)	1 (3.1%)
Anonymous announcer	30 (61.2%)	10 (31.8%)
Nongovernment celebrity	0	0
Spouse or family member	0	1 (3.1%)
Combination	1 (2.0%)	2 (6.3%)
Other	1 (2.0%)	6 (18.8%)
<u>*² SOUND</u>		
Live	16 (32.7%)	19 (59.4%)
Voice-over	33 (67.3%)	12 (37.5%)
Not applicable	0	1 (3.1%)
<u>USE OF MUSIC</u>	31 (63.3%)	18 (56)

*¹ Chi-square is significant at $p < .05$

*² Chi-square is significant at $p < .01$

Table 4 on the use of negative advertising indicates negative attacks were made more often in issue ads (57.1%) than in image ads (37.5%). However, for both issue and image ads, the focus was predominantly "candidate positive," respectively, 57.1 percent and 71.9 percent. For issue ads, the negative attack made with the most frequency was on the "performance of the candidate's opponent" (46.9%; a statistically significant finding at $p < .01$), followed by attacks on the "opponent's issue stands/consistency" (40.8%). The most frequent attacks made in image ads were on the "opponent's personal characteristics" (31.3%), followed by attacks on the "opponent's group affiliation or associations" (28.1 %). The most popular strategy in making a negative attack for both issue and image ads was "negative association of the opponent" with negative phrases or images.

Table 4

Use of Negative Advertising

	Issue (N=49)	Image (N=32)
<u>NEGATIVE ATTACK MADE</u>	28 (57.1%)	12 (37.5%)
<u>FOCUS OF SPOT</u>		
Candidate positive	28 (57.1%)	23 (71.9%)
Opponent negative	21 (42.9%)	9 (28.1%)
<u>NATURE OF NEGATIVE ATTACK</u>		
Personal characteristics	15 (30.6%)	10 (31.3%)
Issue stands/consistency	20 (40.8%)	8 (25.0%)
Group affiliation/associations	9 (18.4%)	9 (28.1%)
Background/qualifications	8 (16.3%)	8 (25.0%)
* Performance	23 (46.9%)	5 (15.6%)
<u>STRATEGIES IN MAKING NEGATIVE ATTACKS</u>		
Humor/ridicule	7 (14.3%)	8 (25.0%)
Negative association	26 (53.1%)	10 (31.3%)
Name-calling	5 (10.2%)	2 (6.3%)
Guilt by association	16 (32.7%)	8 (25.0%)
* Chi-square is significant at $p < .01$		

In Table 5 on use of content appeals, two significant statistical differences between the issue and image ads emerged: "issue concerns" and "policy proposals," both used with greater frequency in the issue ads. The content of the appeal for issue ads was primarily "issue concerns," followed by "personality characteristics." The most frequent content appeals for image ads were first "personality characteristics," followed by "issue concerns." Coders were also asked to determine the dominant content of the appeal of the ads; this dimension was found to be statistically significant ($p < .0000$). The results of dominant

content of appeals paralleled the findings for the use of content appeal. For issue ads, the dominant content of the appeal was "issue concerns," followed by "personality characteristics," while for image ads the dominant content of the appeal was "personality characteristics" followed by "issue concerns." "Issue concerns" were five times or more likely to be used in issue rather than image ads, while "personality characteristics" were five times as likely to be used in image ads.

Table 5

Use of Content Appeals

	Issue (N=49)	Image (N=32)
<u>USE OF CONTENT APPEALS IN ADS</u>		
Partisanship	7 (14.3%)	7 (21.9%)
* ¹ Issue Concerns	43 (87.8%)	15 (46.9%)
Policy preferences	20 (40.8%)	9 (28.1%)
* ² Policy proposals	11 (22.4%)	0
Personality characteristics	34 (69.4%)	28 (87.5%)
Group affiliations	13 (26.5%)	9 (28.1%)
* ¹ Chi-square is significant at $p < .001$		
* ² Chi-square is significant at $p < .01$		
<u>* DOMINANT CONTENT OF APPEAL IN ADS</u>		
Partisanship	4 (8.2%)	3 (9.4%)
Issue Concerns	29 (59.2%)	4 (12.5%)
Policy preferences	3 (6.1%)	0
Policy proposals	4 (8.2%)	0
Personality characteristics	7 (14.3%)	23 (71.9%)
Group affiliations	2 (4.1%)	2 (6.3%)
* Chi-square is significant at $p < .0000$		

As detailed in Table 6, describing strategies used in the ads, several characteristics and strategies used in issue and image ads were found to have statistically significant differences: "charisma and the office," "consulting with world leaders," "above the trenches" approach, "taking the offensive position on issues," and "representing the center of the party. The strategies of "charisma and the office," "consulting with world leaders," and the "above the trenches" approach were about three times as likely to appear in an image ad than in an issue ad. "Representing the center of the party" was a strategy about four times more likely to be seen in an issue ad than in an image ad, while "taking the offensive position on issues" was about twice as likely to be seen in an issue ad than in an image ad.

The top three most frequently used strategies in issue ads were "depending on surrogates to speak," discussion of "competency and the office," and "attacking the record of the opponent." For image ads, the top three most popular strategies were discussion of "competency and the office," "depending on surrogates to speak," and "emphasizing optimism for the future."

Only the candidate characteristic of "toughness" was found to have statistically significant differences in its use in issue and image ads; "toughness" was about one and one-half times more likely to appear in issue rather than image ads. Both issue and image ads emphasized the candidate characteristics of "competency," "qualifications," and "performance/success" with similar frequency.

Table 6

Strategies Used in Commercials

	Issue (N=49)	Image (N=32)
Use of trappings to transmit the importance of the office	11 (22.4%)	10 (31.3%)
Presidency stands for legitimacy	13 (26.5%)	13 (40.6%)
Competency and the office	31 (63.3%)	20 (62.5%)
* ¹ Charisma and the office	6 (12.2%)	10 (31.3%)
* ¹ Consulting with world leaders	4 (8.2%)	8 (25.0%)
Using endorsements of other leaders	6 (12.2%)	1 (3.1%)
Emphasizing accomplishments	20 (40.8%)	12 (37.5%)
* ¹ "Above the trenches" approach	4 (8.2%)	9 (28.1%)
Depending on surrogates to speak	34 (69.4%)	20 (62.5%)
Calling for changes	18 (36.7%)	15 (46.9%)
Emphasizing optimism for future	24 (49.0%)	20 (62.5%)
Speaking to traditional values	26 (53.1%)	16 (50.0%)
* ² Representing the center of the party	20 (40.8%)	3 (9.4%)
* ¹ Taking the offensive position on issues	23 (46.9%)	7 (21.9%)
Attacking the record of opponent	29 (59.2%)	12 (37.5%)
<u>CANDIDATE CHARACTERISTICS</u>		
Honesty/Integrity	27 (55.1%)	22 (68.8%)
Warmth	13 (26.5%)	12 (37.5%)
Competency	35 (71.4%)	22 (68.8%)
Performance/Success	30 (61.2%)	19 (59.4%)
Active	25 (51.0%)	12 (37.5%)
Qualifications	33 (67.3%)	19 (59.4%)
Aggressiveness	23 (46.9%)	9 (28.1%)
* ¹ Toughness	35 (71.4%)	15 (46.9%)
* ¹ Chi-square is significant at $p < .05$		
* ² Chi-square is significant at $p < .01$		

Discussion

Issue Ads

Shyles's work on 1980 ads suggested the basic differences between issue and image ads were that issue ads were straightforward and image ads were slickly-produced. These distinctions did not seem to be so clear in the 1988 political presidential advertisements. Structurally, issue ads from the 1988 race relied primarily on "issue dramatization" in terms of format, which offered a more sophisticated presentation of a candidate's issue concerns than the candidate speaking on behalf of the issue. Similarly, the production for 1988 issue ads was mostly varied, a combination of types, followed by "cinema verite" and "candidate head-on." Computer graphics and "freeze-frame" special effects were used with more frequency in the 1988 issue ads than in the 1980 issue ads. The primary speakers in 1988 issue ads were not the candidates themselves, as in the 1980 ads, but rather "anonymous announcers" and "voice-overs." For the 1988 ads, music was used with greater frequency in issue ads rather than in image ads, reversing the trend found in the 1980 ads. The dress for candidates in both issue and image ads was formal, unlike the predominance of formal dress in only issue ads for the 1980 commercials.

In terms of the content of 1988 issue ads, the dominant rhetorical style was "informative." e the viewers by using evidence or facts. Similarly, the dominant appeal was "logical," while the predominant content appeals were "issue

concerns" and "policy proposals." The dominant rhetorical styles and content appeals used in 1988 issue ads were those traditionally found in political issue ads. However, emotional rhetorical styles and content appeals were present in the 1988 issue ads at a higher level than issue-related appeals and styles were present in 1988 image ads.

Though the 1988 issue ads emphasize much the same issue content specified by the 1980 ads, "issue positions" and "policy proposals," there is the addition of image information offered through a more sophisticated and complex presentation; no longer were issue ads straight-forward in either content or production.

Image Ads

While a shift took place from direct to more indirect candidate appeals in issue ads from 1980 to 1988, in image ads the appeals shifted from more indirect to direct candidate appeals. The predominant format for 1988 image ads was candidate "introspection," a format in which the candidate reflects on his/her job in office, mission as a candidate or philosophy of government; usually this format involves address by the candidate either simply to the viewer or to others. Unlike the 1980 ads where narration was mostly by others and the candidate performed little direct address, the primary speaker for image ads in 1988 was the candidate her/himself, followed by the "anonymous announcer." The main production techniques involved in 1988 image ads were equally combined production methods and "cinema

verite." Still-photos and "montage" were the most common special effects in image ads. As previously mentioned, in 1988 music appeared more frequently in the issue rather than the image ads, reversing the 1980 results. Also reversing the 1980 results was dress of the candidate; the predominant dress for 1988 image ads was formal.

The 1980 and 1988 image ads contained basically similar content, focusing on emotional appeals on personal characteristics, but altered presentational formats. Traditional issue-related ad appeals and styles were a part of these 1988 image ads, but not to the extent that image-related appeals and styles were a part of 1988 issue ads. These image ads, unlike the 1980 ads which offered mostly indirect images of the candidates, provided a mixture of direct and indirect images of the candidates. The production qualities of the ads remained complex, like the 1980 image ads; both focused on a rich, cinematic, visual style.

Summary

The shifts in these issue and image ads would seem to be symbiotic; though this research cannot establish the directionality of the shift in structure and content of issue and image ads, it suggests the locus of change has been in issue ads. Issue ads have become more like news packages, appearing to deliver objective facts and information about the candidates and opponents. Sophisticated graphic techniques and anonymous,

credible announcers deliver the messages. A possible reason for the shift to complexity of construction and to indirect messages in issue ads, such as issue dramatizations mediated by anonymous announcers, is the increased use and number of negative issue attack ads. In trying to quell potential backlash effects, candidates making negative attacks often do not appear in these appeals.

Hence, the mode for personal, direct messages from the candidate necessarily would shift to image ads. Image ads become the forum for the candidates' comments and vision to the viewers. Although the manifest content of the image ads has not changed much from 1980 to 1988, the intensity and directness of the message from the candidate has increased; no longer are testimonials the chief way the candidate's personal characteristics are described, but the candidate speaks to the voter directly.

Other important components of the 1988 issue ads, such as music and emotional rhetorical styles and content appeals, suggest affective "channels" were being tapped through these ads. These issues are being used to promote a candidate's image or tarnish an opponent's image as suggested by the work of Robert Rudd and Allan Loudon, respectively. By creating political ads that appear to be issue-oriented but deliver important image information, political campaigns maximize their advertising dollar. Voters preferring issue information about candidates can base their decisions on rational "facts" and those voters

preferring image information can infer, as Garramone has suggested, the candidate's personality or image from the issue evidence offered. Both the issue and image reliant voter can then be satisfied that their political decisions are sound. As voters have become more sophisticated and political television ads more expensive in the politically image-rich 1980s, political ads' construction has had to become similarly more noteworthy, complex and economically efficient. In 1988, this political advertising need was met through heavier reliance on issue ads, to deliver both positive and negative and issue and image information.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT SURVEILLANCE AND EVALUATIONS OF LOCAL
ELECTED OFFICIALS: A COMPARISON OF NEWSPAPER,
TELEVISION, AND MIXED-MEDIA USERS

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ABSTRACT

Contrary to what some authors have suggested, this study takes the theoretical position that people who use newspapers (more than television) to follow what goes on in local government and local public affairs will evaluate elected officials significantly less favorably than those who use television (more than newspapers) for that purpose. The study is based on telephone survey research of 373 respondents. Statistical tests provided support for all study hypotheses at or below $p < .002$ significance levels. Controlling for all demographic variables of interest resulted in no significance level rising above $p < .004$. Added support for the study's theoretical perspective and hypotheses came from a separate post hoc analysis of 144 college students.

INTRODUCTION

During the 1950s and early 1960s, studies showed that Americans generally held at least moderate trust in their government and also felt relatively politically efficacious.¹ Then, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, feelings of increased cynicism and declining trust in government began showing up at alarming rates in studies of the American electorate, and concern rose in the political science community that such developments might be a harbinger, signaling a deterioration of the democratic order.²

A number of studies have documented rises in political cynicism (accompanied by declines in trust, external efficacy, and participation) over the past several decades.³ In addition, both political science and mass communication researchers have questioned the role of mass media in relation to these phenomena. For example, Robinson suggested in 1976 that "Instead of stimulating viewer interest and involvement in social action, TV news may instead spread a political malaise that discourages political participation."⁴ And, as Pateman later pointed out, "political apathy is not, as one writer dismissively claimed, 'nobody's fault'.⁵ By the early 1980s, a number of political scientists and mass communication scholars were looking to television content in general (i.e., televised political communication of all types--not just TV news) as a major explanation for the decline in political parties, voter turnout, and political trust.⁶

Associated with this view are several studies which have demonstrated clearly that media use is significantly associated with knowledge of governmental and public affairs⁷ and that television users are less knowledgeable than print users.⁸ Additionally, in their study of political sophistication, Lau and Erber suggested that a greater sense of cynicism and distrust should be found among members of the electorate who are more reliant on television than those who rely on newspapers or other media.⁹ And Becker and Whitney cite several studies (Robinson, 1975; Robinson, 1976; Robinson and Zukin, 1976; and Robinson, 1977) to conclude that:

television dependence is associated with political cynicism, political inefficacy, partisan disloyalty and acceptance of third-party candidates, and misperceptions of candidate strength. For example, persons relying on television are more likely to think they cannot understand politics than those not dependent on that medium. The television dependent also are more likely to believe that government leaders are crooked and to think members of Congress tend to lose touch with their constituents once they are elected.¹⁰

The same authors also cite Wade and Schramm (1969) who found that:

persons who reported the broadcast media were their major sources of news were less well informed on a variety of issues than were print users.¹¹

Based on the premise that people dependent on television for political information know less about politics, Becker and Whitney suggest that lower knowledge levels are associated with lower levels of trust.

Conversely, the current study departs from this conventional view and, for several reasons, proceeds from an opposite theoretical perspective: that the closer people follow what goes on (at the local level, at least), and the more they use newspapers (rather than television) to do so, the less favorably they will tend to evaluate the leadership of their local elected officials. As stated, there are several reasons for advocating this theoretical approach.

First, although past prevailing sentiment seems to favor linking television reliance with lower levels of political trust, one certainly can find opinions and studies in the research literature which dissent from this position. As McLeod, Kosicki, and Rucinski recently observed,

At the same time as the political system was destabilizing in the mid'60s, television was becoming the dominant political medium. Some imprudent observers have taken this as sufficient causal evidence of television's corrosive effect on the political system. The rise of television was, of course, only one among many changes in the media in the last two decades.¹²

Even Becker and Whitney qualified their findings on the relationship between television reliance and lower levels of political trust by acknowledging that, "Becker et al. (1979), however, were able to show effects of dependency on trust only on the local level and even there the relationships were slight and somewhat inconsistent."¹³

Secondly, it could be that content, format, and context differences between local newspapers and local television might support the proposition that heavy users of the former would

evaluate the leadership of local elected officials less favorably than heavy television users. Obviously, newspapers are better able to present more in-depth and comprehensive reports of local governmental activities than is television. This means that such newspaper accounts can (and often do) offer more critical assessments of government's performance. In addition, newspaper readers (as opposed to television viewers) have access to editorials and letters to the editor which, perhaps as often as not, tend to be more critical than laudatory of public officials' positions and behavior. In other words, it may be that the newspaper reliant not only have more knowledge than the television reliant about what goes on in local government--but they also have more negative information which could contribute to lower evaluations of local elected officials.

The question remains, however, as to why the television reliant (who presumably follow what is going on less and also know less) would be inclined to evaluate their local elected officials more favorably. One possible explanation here might be found in Lau's¹⁴ discussion of negativity effects where the hypothesis is suggested that American society holds a normative constraint over open criticism of others. Associated with this precept is the phenomenon of survey research respondents' tendency to provide "socially desirable" answers.¹⁵ By extension, therefore, it may be that there is a tendency for those who are less aware and who know less to give normatively acceptable (i.e., non-critical and socially desirable) evaluations.

Finally, and of the most importance, it also could be that previous uses and gratifications research (whether related to political alienation or not) may have erred methodologically. Over time, a number of mass communication scholars have questioned whether traditional measurements of media use and reliance for political information are valid assessments of those constructs. For example, Miller and Asp have suggested that "frequency of media contact" offers a better gauge.¹⁶ McDonald and Reese also have questioned traditional "reliance" measures, proposing instead the adoption of a "media orientation" perspective which would correlate actively following politics separately with print and broadcast media.¹⁷ Focusing specifically on the "main source" tap, Robinson and Levy have stated that "almost from the beginning, communication scholars have questioned the methodological soundness of the main source question."¹⁸ The authors go on to say that:

The basic main source question is improperly asked, inappropriate to the subject matter, unable to be answered accurately, and, at best, worded ambiguously. Moreover, several studies have shown it simply does not hold true for local news (Lemert, 1970; Stempel, 1973; Levy, 1978; Adams, 1981).¹⁹

Along these lines, another possible criticism of past media research in relation to political communication is that much of it tends to be singular in focus. First, as McCombs has stated, "Communication scientists typically have fragmented the ongoing process of communication."²⁰ In that regard, previous research may have erred by isolating media use in an attempt to establish the supremacy of one particular medium (e.g., television) over

another (e.g., print) as the "main source" of obtaining political information. The problem with this approach is that it fails to recognize or measure the potential impact of multiple media use in the political communication process. Also, in their examination of media dependency and reliance literature, Ferguson, Chung, and Weigold cited (among others) Reese's²¹ suggestion that reliance on one medium should not exclude reliance on another, and the authors concluded that "useful measures of reliance should allow for reliance on more than one medium."²² This factor, combined with the theoretical assumptions outlined in the foregoing, leads to a statement of the current study's hypotheses:

H1: People who report using more than one medium "a lot" to follow what goes on in local government and local public affairs will significantly outnumber those who report using only one medium "a lot."

H2: People who report following what goes on in local government and local public affairs "most of the time" will register significantly lower (i.e., more unfavorable) evaluations of local elected officials' leadership than those who follow what goes on only less often.

H3: People who report using newspapers "a lot"--in combination with using television less than "a lot"--to follow what goes on in local government and local public affairs will also report that they follow what goes on "most of the time" to a significantly greater degree than people who report using television "a lot"--in combination with using newspapers less than "a lot."

H4: People who report using newspapers "a lot"--in combination with using television less than "a lot"--to follow what goes on in local government and local public affairs most of the time will also register significantly lower (i.e., more unfavorable) evaluations of local elected officials' leadership than people who report using television "a lot"--in combination with using newspapers less than "a lot"--to follow what goes on.

METHODOLOGY

Data collection for the study reported here took place in September 1989 and employed a telephone survey using random-digit dialing among respondents who were 18 years or older and who lived within the city limits of a medium-size, Southeastern United States community where a research university is located. The sample frame was purchased from a commercial sampling firm which matched postal zip codes with telephone prefixes. After proportionate prefix numbers were established, the last four digits were generated randomly to assure that unlisted, newer, and recently changed numbers would have a chance to be included in the sample. Known business numbers and those for university offices were purposively screened out. More than 2,000 dialings produced 517 valid, completed interviews.

To assure that each member of the household had an equal chance of being included in the study, interviewers were instructed to request to speak with the person in the household who had celebrated a birthday most recently. A screening question was asked first to determine whether respondents did in fact live within the city's limits. This residence requirement helped assure that respondents were eligible to register and vote in city elections for public officials and, therefore, would be more apt to have better reason and motivation to assess the leadership of elected city officials than people living in the area but outside the city.²³

Respondents were asked to evaluate city public officials with the question, "How would you rate the leadership of elected

city officials, that is, the city commission? Would you say it is excellent, good, fair, or poor?"

Another question was intended to elicit how closely respondents follow local government and local public affairs with the following: "Some people seem to follow what's going on in local government and local public affairs most of the time, while others are not that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in local government and local public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, hardly at all, or never?"

The media use questions were introduced with the statement: "People learn about local government and local public affairs in different ways. I'm going to read you a list of some of those sources of information. For each, would you tell me whether you use that source a lot, some, only now and then, hardly ever, or never in finding out about local government and local public affairs.

"First, what about newspapers - do you read newspapers a lot, some, only now and then, hardly ever, or never to learn about local government and public affairs?" An identically-worded question then was asked for television, radio, and interpersonal communication.

RESULTS

Sample Description

With the exception of gender (62.9 percent female in the sample and 52 percent in the general population), all sample demographics very closely paralleled the community's general population characteristics and proportions. Of the study's respondents, 75 percent were white and 18 percent black. The median education level was "some college" with 46 percent having at least a bachelor's degree and 21 percent at least a master's. The mean age was 40, and the median income was between \$25,000-\$30,000 annually. Finally, 87 percent of the respondents regarded themselves as permanent residents of the city, 80 percent reported being registered to vote, and 67 percent said they had voted in the most recent city-wide election.

Testing The Hypotheses

Prior to presenting the study's results and tests of hypotheses, a few explanatory comments are in order. First, no attempt was made in the current study to tap political cognitions directly. How closely people reported following what goes on in local government and local public affairs is regarded as an indication of political involvement. A review of frequencies prior to data analyses revealed that the responses of "only now and then," "hardly ever," and "never" for the how closely people follow what goes on in local government and local public affairs question could be collapsed into a "least often" category.

The first hypothesis considers respondents answers to media use questions for newspapers, television, radio, and

interpersonal communication. The third and fourth hypotheses mixed-media use of newspapers and television only. For purposes of analyses, media use responses are divided into two categories of 1). "a lot" and 2). all other responses (i.e., "some," "only now and then," etc.) for both newspapers and television.

Only one aspect of political alienation--incumbent-based trust--is examined in the study, and it is measured by respondents' evaluations of local elected officials. For purposes of analyses, local elected official's leadership evaluations are categorized as "favorable" for "excellent" and "good" ratings and "unfavorable" for "fair" and "poor" ratings.

Finally, a post hoc analysis revealed that 144 of the 517 respondents were full-time college students, and significant differences were discovered between them and the other 373 general population residents on all the variables of interest. Hypotheses testing and final results, therefore, are based on responses from the 373 general population residents only.

The first hypothesis stated that people who report using more than one medium "a lot" to follow what goes on in local government and local public affairs would significantly outnumber those who report using just one medium "a lot" for that purpose, and nearly twice as many did ($n = 206$ to $n = 105$). A NPAR Binomial test here (based on a 50-50 split) was statistically significant with a 2-tailed $p < .00001$.

Table 1 depicts city commission evaluations for the general population sample. Overall, the 324 respondents who offered an

evaluation split relatively evenly with unfavorable ratings slightly outnumbering favorable ones by 52.5 to 47.5 percent. Any deviation from this split emerging among some sample subset (e.g., particular media orientation or "follow local government" groups), therefore, should be considered as a candidate for possible significance of difference tests.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Hypothesis two predicted that people who follow what goes on in local government and local public affairs "most of the time" would register significantly lower evaluations of elected city officials' leadership than those who report following what goes on less often.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Table 2 shows favorable and unfavorable evaluations cross-tabulated with how closely respondents follow local government and local public affairs. As hypothesized, those who reported following local politics "most of the time" were significantly more likely to give unfavorable ratings of local elected

officials than those who follow what goes on locally less often. In fact, as one moves down Table 2 (and farther away from actively following local politics) there is a progressive reversal in the ratio with favorability ratings exceeding the unfavorable ones in a nearly linear fashion. Such a pattern is consistent with the theoretical perspective underpinning the current study's hypotheses that the worst local officials' evaluations are from those who follow politics the most, and the statistical analysis here produced support for hypothesis two. Specifically, an initial difference of proportions test was significant at $p < .001$. A regression analysis then was conducted which produced a significance of $[F(1,320) = 14.8, p < .0001]$. And a test of linearity was also significant with $F(1) = 14.7, p < .0001$.

To investigate the extent to which various demographic variables might have had an influence on the findings, post hoc partial correlations were run controlling for those variables. Although the partialling out slightly weakened the association between how closely respondents reported following what goes on locally and their evaluations of local elected officials in several cases, in no instance did the significance level rise above $p < .004$. The control variables--with accordant significance levels shown in parentheses--were: age ($p < .001$), length of time respondents had lived in the city ($p < .0001$), whether respondents thought of themselves as permanent or temporary residents of the city ($p < .0001$), education ($p < .001$), occupation ($p < .001$),

ethnicity ($p < .001$), income ($p < .003$), and when controlling for all of these variables simultaneously ($p < .004$). This means that hypothesis two was supported even when controlling for possible intervening demographic variables.

Table 3 displays two mixed-media combinations (i.e., those who said they use newspapers "a lot" and who also said that they used television less than "a lot" to follow what goes on locally in the top portion of the table, and the reverse of that mix in the bottom portion)²⁴ in relation to how often respondents said they follow local government and local public affairs (i.e., "most of the time," "some of the time," and "least often").

Table 3 relates to the study's third hypothesis which stated:

H3: People who report using newspapers "a lot"--in combination with using television other than "a lot"--to follow what goes on in local government and local public affairs will also report that they follow what goes on "most of the time" to a significantly greater degree than people who report using television "a lot"--in combination with using newspapers other than "a lot."

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

In Table 3, it is perhaps most illuminating to compare the polar "follow" groups (i.e., "most of the time" and "least often") for the two mixed-media variables. As shown, this two-by-two matrix is virtually a symmetric "mirror image." A regression analysis here which involved all three "follow" groups

(i.e., with the "some of the time" group included) was highly significant with $F(1,205) = 35.5$, $p < .0001$, providing sound statistical support for hypothesis three.

Post hoc partial correlations were run again on this relationship, controlling for all of the aforementioned demographic variables, and in this instance the association was not weakened at all; significance levels did not exceed $p < .0001$ for any single variable or for the total combination of variables. In other words, the significant association between newspaper use "a lot" and following what goes on in local government and local public affairs "most of the time" held up even when controlling for possible intervening demographic variables.

Table 4 looks at the same mixed-media variables as Table 3 but in relation to respondents' evaluations of local elected officials as stated in the fourth hypothesis which read:

H4: People who report using newspapers "a lot"--in combination with using television other than "a lot"--to follow what goes on in local government and local public affairs most of the time will also register significantly lower (i.e., more unfavorable) evaluations of local elected officials' leadership than people who report using television "a lot"--in combination with using newspapers other than "a lot"--to follow what goes on.

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

As indicated in Table 4, the results definitely support the hypothesis, and they achieved significance. The regression analysis outcome produced $F(1) = 10.48, p < .002$. Controlling for all of the aforementioned demographic variables resulted in no significance level rising above $p < .002$.

Post Hoc Analyses

Besides controlling for demographic variables, additional post hoc analyses revealed significant differences between 373 general population respondents and 144 college students. Because these differences are germane to both the study's theoretical perspective and its hypotheses, a brief discussion of them seems appropriate.

First, college student respondents in this study reported following what goes on in local government and local public affairs significantly less than those in the general population [$T(508) = 7.77, p < .001$]. They also use newspapers less to follow local affairs [$T(510) = 3.42, p < .001$] as well as using television less [$T(505) = 5.34, p < .001$]. Yet, college students evaluated local elected officials significantly higher than did general population respondents [$T(180) = -1.95, p < .05$]. If it can be presumed that college students in this study know less about what goes on in local government and local public affairs (based on their acknowledged lower levels of following what goes on and their lower use of the major media in that regard), then their higher (i.e., more favorable) evaluations of local elected officials would appear to be consistent with the theoretical

perspective being advanced in the current research. And while these results certainly were not hypothesized, they do suggest rather strong support for the study's hypotheses.

A final post hoc analysis was conducted to determine whether any significant differences could be found within the college group itself, and one did emerge which also seems to support the study's major thesis. A Chi-Square test was conducted on the local elected officials' evaluation variable in relation to the two mixed-media groups (i.e., newspapers "a lot" along with television less than "a lot" and vice-versa). Even though the newspaper "a lot" group gave more favorable than unfavorable evaluations to local elected officials (52.3% to 47.7%), the television "a lot" group registered a 75 percent to 25 percent approval rating, and that association was significant [$\chi^2(1) = 3.7$, $p < .05$, $n = 72$]. Partial correlations controlling for all of the aforementioned demographic variables (substituting year in school for occupation) did not result in a weakened relationship; all remained below the .05 significance level.

DISCUSSION

Limitations

The primary limitation on survey research is generally that of sampling error. In this study with 373 respondents, a 95 percent confidence interval has a sampling error of plus or minus 5.1 percent. Other limitations which apply to survey research--including this study--are: 1). respondents who may have failed to

understand questions being asked, 2). the possibility that responses could have been influenced by events taking place locally at the time of the survey, 3). non-respondent bias, and 4). respondents who may have given socially desirable answers rather than honest opinions.

Sampling error is, of course, a given and cannot be improved. To address the other limitations cited above, 1). Interviewers were thoroughly trained, supervised, and monitored to assure consistency of question asking, and the questionnaire instrument was pretested several times in order to identify and eliminate any ambiguous wording. 2). A review of the community's major newspaper for the two-week period previous to the study and continuing through the survey itself revealed no out of the ordinary coverage of local events, editorials, or letters to the editor. 3). As to non-respondent bias, it cannot be known whether people whose telephone numbers were never reached (even after three calls on different days and at different times) differed in some significant way from those who did participate in the study. A demographic review of study respondents, however, very closely matched with the general population. And, there were no significant demographic differences between those who gave "no answer" responses to any particular item and those who answered all the questions. 4). It also cannot be known to what extent some respondents might have given socially desirable answers.

Aside from these standard survey research limitations, the current study also might be limited (in terms of general-

izability) by the fact that it was conducted in a community which has had a prolonged history of conflict between city and county government entities that has been played out substantially in the media and especially in the newspaper. This might explain--at least in part--why a plurality of the total sample (52.5%) gave the city commission an unfavorable rating. At the same time, it should be noted that differences in approval ratings emerged within the context of the study's hypotheses, and those differences were significant.

Finally, the research results also might be limited in that the study community is somewhat dominated by the presence of a research university and, therefore, has comparatively higher levels of education and a slightly different occupational configuration than communities which are not so overrepresented by university personnel. The question then arises as to whether the results could be replicated in a more (or less) populated area where those demographic anomalies are absent. (More will be said about the differences that education, occupation, and income had on the study's fourth hypothesis under the Conclusions and Implications section.)

Conclusions and Implications

The first hypothesis--that people who use both newspapers and television "a lot" to follow what goes on locally would significantly outnumber those who use one (and only one) of those media "a lot"--was supported. In fact, only 60 of the 373 respondents said they use only newspapers "a lot," just 40 people

gave that same response for television, a mere 11 respondents placed either radio or interpersonal communication in that category. The implication here seems to be that mass media research needs to take multiple media use into account. This is not to suggest that attempts to identify the "main source" should be abandoned. It is to say, however, that concentrating solely on the "main source"--without regard to other media use--probably runs the risk of overlooking much rich and meaningful data.

The second hypothesis also was supported and, in turn, so was the study's theoretical perspective that higher levels of political alienation (in terms of incumbent-based trust) at the local level are associated with more closely following what goes on in local government and local public affairs (which is taken here as an indicator of political involvement). This finding certainly calls into question the previous theoretical assumption (found in some of the literature) that the exact opposite is true.

Hypothesis number three predicted that those people who use newspapers "a lot" and also use television less than "a lot" to follow what goes on locally "most of the time" was supported. This finding is consistent with the tenor and direction of previous studies, and it should come as no surprise.

Finally, and of most importance, the study's fourth hypothesis, which predicted that people who use newspapers "a lot" in combination with using television less than "a lot" to follow what goes on locally would evaluate local elected

officials significantly more unfavorably than those who use television "a lot"--in combination with newspapers less than "a lot"-- for that same purpose, was supported.

In conclusion, it would appear that the study's overall findings--at the very least--should cast some doubt on the notion that lower levels of political knowledge (e.g., those found in the television-reliant) are associated with higher degrees of political cynicism.

NOTES

1. Norman H. Nie, Sidney Verba, and John R. Petrocik, The Changing American Voter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 35-36.
2. Arthur H. Miller, "Political Issues and Trust in Government: 1964-1970," American Political Science Review, 68:951-972 (1974).
3. For example, see Stephen C. Craig, "The Decline of Partisanship in the United States: A Reexamination of the Neutrality Hypothesis," Political Behavior, 1:57-78 (1985) and Nie, Verba, and Petrocik, op. cit.
4. Michael Robinson, "Public Affairs Television and the Growth of Political Malaise: The Case of the 'Selling of the Pentagon'," American Political Science Review, 70:409-432, (1976).
5. C. Pateman, "The Civic Culture: A Philosophical Critique," in Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, eds., The Civic Culture Revisited, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980).
6. For example, see Austin Ranney, Channels of Power: The Impact of Television on American Politics, (New York: Basic Books, 1983).
7. For example, see Lee B. Becker and Sharon Dunwoody, "Media Use, Public Affairs Knowledge And Voting in a Local Election," Journalism Quarterly, 59:212-218 (1982).
8. Ibid., p. 214. Also see S. Wade and Wilbur Schramm, "The Mass Media as Sources of Public Affairs, Science and Health Knowledge," Public Opinion Quarterly, 33:197-209 (1969).
9. Richard R. Lau and Ralph Erber, "Political Sophistication: An Information Processing Perspective," in Kraus and M. Perloff, op.

cit., p. 60.

10. Lee B. Becker and D. Charles Whitney, "Effects of Media Dependencies: Audience Assessment of Government," Communication Research, 7, 1:95-120 (January 1980). The actual studies these authors cite include: Michael J. Robinson, "American Political Legitimacy in an Era of Electronic Journalism: Reflections on the Evening News," in D. Cater and R. Adler, eds., Television as a Social Force: New Approaches to TV Criticism, (New York: Praeger, 1975), pp. 97-139; Robinson, op. cit., 1976; Michael J. Robinson and C. Zukin, "Television and The Wallace Vote," Journal of Communication, 26, 2:79-83 (1976); Michael J. Robinson, "Television News and the Presidential Nominating Process: The Case of Spring, 1976," unpublished, Catholic University, Washington, D.C., 1977.
11. ibid, p. 96. The cited work is that of S. Wade and Wilbur Schramm, "The Mass Media as Sources of Public Affairs, Science and Health Knowledge," Public Opinion Quarterly, 33:197-209 (1969).
12. Jack M. McLeod, Gerald M. Kosicki, and Dianne M. Rucinski, "Political Communication Research: An Assessment of the Field," Mass Comm Review, 15:8-15, (1988).
13. ibid, p. 99.
14. Richard R. Lau, "Two Explanations for Negativity Effects in Political Behavior," American Journal of Political Science, 29, 1, 119-138 (1984).
15. For a discussion of socially desirable responses, see, for example, Don A Dillman, Mail and Telephone Surveys: The Total Design Method (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978) p. 62.
16. Arthur H. Miller and Kent Asp, "Learning About Politics From

the Media: A Comparative Study of Sweden and the United States," in Sidney Kraus and Richard M. Perloff, eds., Mass Media and Political Thought, (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1985).

17. Daniel G. McDonald and Stephen D. Reese, "Media Reliance, Television News and Viewer Selectivity." Unpublished paper presented to the R-TV Journalism Division of the Association for Education in Journalism, 1985.

18. John P. Robinson and Mark R. Levy, The Main Source: Learning from Television News (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1986), p. 8.

19. ibid. The specific studies cited by these authors are: J. Lemert, "News Media Competition Under Conditions Favorable to Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly, 47:272-280 (1970); G. Stempel III, "Effects on Performance of a Cross-Media Monopoly," Journalism Monographs, 29 (1973); M. Levy, "The Audience Experience with Television News," Journalism Monographs, 55, (April, 1978); R. Adams, "Newspapers and Television as News Information Media," Journalism Quarterly, 58:627-629 (1981).

20. Maxwell E. McCombs, "Mass Communication in Political Campaigns: Information, Gratification, and Persuasion," in F. G. Kline and P. J. Tichenor, eds., Current Perspectives in Mass Communication Research (Beverly Hills CA: Sage, 1972), pp. 169-194.

21. Stephen D. Reese, "The News Media and the Audience: Dependency Research Directions for an Information Society." Paper presented to the International Communication Association, San Francisco, 1984.

22. Mary Ann Ferguson, Man-Soo Chung, and Michael F. Weigold, "Need for Cognition and the Medium Dependency Components of Reliance and Exposure: A Study of Newspaper, Magazine, Television

and Radio Dependency." Paper presented to the International Communication Association, Mass Communication Division, Honolulu, Hawaii, May, 1985.

23. At the conclusion of the interview, respondents also were asked the name of the street on which they lived and the nearest cross street. This checking device helped assure that respondents' self reports of city residency were valid. Copies of the survey instrument used in the study may be requested from the author.

24. In the study community, there exists one chain-owned daily newspaper, several weeklies, and an independent, university student paper which is published Monday through Friday during the regular school year and twice weekly during summer sessions. In terms of television coverage, there is one local network affiliate, one independent local station, and a cable community access channel which broadcasts live from weekly City Commission meetings. All of these media provide regular coverage of local government and local public affairs to at least some extent.

TABLE 1
TOTAL SAMPLE EVALUATIONS OF CITY COMMISSION

N = 324			
<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>
5%	43%	40%	12%
(15)	(139)	(130)	(40)
<u>Excellent + Good</u>		<u>Fair + Poor</u>	
(Favorable)		(Unfavorable)	
47.5%		52.5%	
(154)		(170)	

TABLE 2
FOLLOW LOCAL GOVERNMENT
BY
CITY COMMISSION EVALUATIONS

N = 322			
<u>HOW CLOSELY FOLLOW:</u>			
	Most of the Time:	Some of the Time:	Least Often:
<u>EVALUATIONS:</u>			
<u>Favorable:</u>	37%	54%	64%
	(119)	(174)	(206)
<u>Unfavorable:</u>	63%	46%	36%
	(203)	(148)	(116)
Totals:	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
	(322)	(322)	(322)

(Number of cases shown in parentheses)

p<.0001

TABLE 3
HOW CLOSELY FOLLOW LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND MEDIA USE

N = 173

HOW CLOSELY FOLLOW:

	<u>Most</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Least Often</u>
Newspapers "A Lot" With	78.8%	62.7%	25.0%
Television Less Than "A Lot"	(52)	(37)	(12)

Television "A Lot" With	21.2%	37.3%	75.0%
Newspapers Less Than "A Lot"	(14)	(22)	(36)
Totals:	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
	(66)	(59)	(48)

(Number of cases shown in parentheses)

p < .0001

TABLE 4
MEDIA USE AND ELECTED OFFICIALS' EVALUATIONS

n = 90

	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Newspapers "A Lot" With	34.9%	65.1%	100%
Television Less Than "A Lot"	(22)	(41)	(63)

Television "A Lot" With	70.4%	29.6%	100%
Newspapers Less Than "A Lot"	(19)	(8)	(27)

(Number of cases shown in parentheses)

p < .002

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ANALYSIS OF VISUAL REFERENCE ASSOCIATIONS
IN TELEVISION NEWS COVERAGE
OF THE 1988 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

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In the period just after World War I, distinguished journalist Walter Lippman offered the prophetic observation that human beings, unable to fully comprehend modern political complexities, make sense of their world by translating reality into understandable symbols.

He called these "the pictures in our heads." Using motion pictures to illustrate some of his point, Lippman suggested most such symbols originate in the human imagination, where each person creates a "pseudo-environment" of understandable, digestible proportions. Humans relate to the world through this filter, Lippman said.¹

Technology developed since Lippman penned those lines has reached into the imagination. The television rather than the imagination now provides the pictures, and its ability to create and transmit visual images as representations of reality has assumed major importance in human communication. This is nowhere more true than in modern political communication.

The research reported here attempted to review the visual

¹Walter Lippman, "The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads," in The Process and Effects of Mass Communication, revised ed. Wilbur Schramm and Donald F. Roberts. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), p. 275.

content of television news coverage the 1988 U.S. presidential election, in order to evaluate the impact of the visual, exclusive of the verbal track. Surprisingly, despite the wealth of research on television, evaluation of the communication exclusively in its visual track is rare.

This is noteworthy because communication scholars have long recognized that pictures communicate in a way that is different from verbal forms. Comprehension of messages conveyed by words requires sequential analysis, however brief. Visual media, on the other hand, communicate by a simultaneous representation of a multitude of stimuli, according to Hicks² and Langer.³

Motion pictures and television are supreme examples of visual forms. Their primary methods of communication employ what Hicks calls "a single expressive statement"⁴ which sets into action a complex mental process involving the viewer's own experience, memory, and imagination.⁵ Influential political consultant Schwartz notes television "gives direct access to people's minds,"⁶ and television scholars Fiske and Hartley note

²Wilson Hicks, Words and Pictures: An Introduction to Photojournalism (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1952), p. 4.

³Suzanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 93.

⁴Hicks, p. 5.

⁵Ibid., p. 7.

⁶Tony Schwartz, The Responsive Chord (New York: Doubleday, 1973), p. 96.

television provides familiar images, and using "codes closely related to those by which we perceive reality itself. It appears to be the natural way of seeing the world."⁷

Tuchman notes the message systems used by television news are exactly the same as those used elsewhere in television. Its visual language, she says, uses selected symbols within the frame of the screen's limits, where the creators of television news speak "a foreign tongue we have all learned to translate but that few of us speak." She adds,

Unfortunately, analysts of news do not customarily treat news film as a visual language. Rather, they naively suppose that news film captures reality without imposing its own rules.*

Tuchman observes television news has developed representational conventions which audiences routinely accept as the presentation of reality. Such conventions include the selective use of elements within the camera's framing lens to present association between individuals. Tuchman adds that such symbolic representations help establish the "web of facticity" by providing "actual" supplementary evidence, freeing the reporter from interpretation.*

Seiter notes television incorporates a process more complex than simply presenting symbols, however.¹⁰ Television

⁷John Fiske and John Hartley, Reading Television (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1978), p. 17.

*Gaye Tuchman, Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality (New York: The Free Press, 1978), p. 107.

*Ibid., p. 109.

¹⁰Ellen Seiter, "Semiotics and Television," in Channels of Discourse, ed. Robert C. Allen (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987) p. 20.

establishes connotation by creating sign systems with different levels of meaning. Selter suggests, for example, that on one level television's news coverage of the Challenger explosion showed a machine in operation, but on another level the shuttle symbolized American efforts in space exploration, and its explosion presented an opportunity to add new meaning by associating this sign with other visual messages (for example, American flags at half-staff), thus allying the shuttle with "tragic loss of patriots' lives."¹¹

Effective manipulation of visual messages involves highly subjective formulations working at intuitive levels. The resulting emotional responses which arise from image combinations may be applied to further associations, establishing further levels of meaning, sometimes wholly unintended. Fiske and Hartley suggest, for example, a director can select the camera operator's shots, but the norms and conventions of the culture determine what will be understood. And because conventions change over time, the processes of visual communication are dynamic.¹²

These blurred edges of meaning can be convenient for those who wish to defy concrete meaning rather than promote it. Boorstin suggests this is why in some contexts--notably marketing--literary communication has been bypassed in favor of visual communication methods.¹³ The logical result, he says, is

¹¹ Selter, p. 30-1.

¹² Fiske and Hartley, p. 82.

¹³ Daniel Boorstin, The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America, 25th Anniversary ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1987), pp. 193-94.

the pseudo-event--the event made purely for media attention. Televised coverage of these events, ostensibly created in order to provide real information to the public, automatically conforms with the visual orientation of television news, resulting in communication in a form that fits the medium.

For the medium of television, Metz suggests the element of the form is the shot, the single, continuous visual perspective on the things in front of the camera lens.¹⁴ (In still photography, this is the "single expressive statement" described by Hicks.) For Metz, meaning is created in both film and television by the linking of shots. The same structure is used in television news to convey meaning, even while its creators follow the fact-based conventions of journalism. Selter explains:

Stand-up shots of reporters on location are an example of this; we may not be able to decipher from the image itself whether Andrea Mitchell is really standing on the White House lawn or not, but TV places an enormous stress on the connection between the image and this location as it exists in real time and space.¹⁵

Thus, in the language system of television--including television news--the ability to structure the visual content of each shot, through organization of the visual signs, controls the ability to establish connotations.

Television journalism has come under increasing scrutiny for

¹⁴Christian Metz, Film Language (London: Oxford Press, 1974).

¹⁵ Selter, p. 23.

about two decades, with numerous studies indicating substantial conformity among the three major networks in selection of items which reach the home screen.¹⁶ Unfortunately, rather than review the messages within news segments and the ways these segments communicate, most researchers have emphasized the number or type of topics covered and/or the amount of time devoted to coverage of these topics. More importantly, overwhelming emphasis has been given to the verbal content of the messages broadcast rather than the visual aspects.

One alternative was provided by The Glasgow (Scotland) Media Group, which found little previous analysis of news film's visual track, with the exception of film theory and French semiotic studies, in which they found "an unnecessarily complex use of language."¹⁷ Nevertheless, they confirmed that a six-month sample of British television news film utilized basic film grammar.

Other research has examined the television viewer's ability

¹⁶Television gatekeeper studies include Joseph R. Dominick, "Business Coverage in Network Newscasts" Journalism Quarterly 58 (Summer, 1981):179-185, which concluded the major networks present similar business coverage; James A. Capo, "Network Watergate Coverage Patterns in Late 1972 and Early 1973" Journalism Quarterly 60 (Winter, 1980): 595-602, which concluded that with the exception of CBS, television coverage of the scandal was superficial; and Daniel Riffe, Brenda Ellis, Momo K. Rogers, Roger L. Van Ommeren and Kieran A. Woodman, "Gatekeeping and the Network News Mix" Journalism Quarterly 63 (Spring, 1986): 315-321, which reviewed nearly ten years' television network news content and found "there is little difference among network news packages."

¹⁷Glasgow University Media Group, Bad News (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1976), p. 27.

to recognize the importance of the image and then decode it. Various aspects of this "visual literacy" have been studied in the literature of advertising, television, film and especially psychology, where related literature generally has dealt with the relative importance of pictures versus words in the communication mix.^{1*} Gunter observed significantly greater recall of picture items in the video news segments and offered a dual-coding hypothesis, under which communication forces use of both verbal and visual processing skills.^{1*} Such observations relate to the literature of television broadcasting regarding comprehension of the visual track messages relative to those in the verbal track, a process known as "redundancy." Research by Reese,^{2*} Drew and Grimes²¹ and Son, et al.,²² indicates redundancy aids comprehension, but in situations in which visual and verbal messages presented simultaneously do not agree in content, visual information overwhelms the verbal.

^{1*}See for example Matthew Hugh Erdelyi and Joan Becker, "Hypermnesia for Pictures," Cognitive Psychology 6 (1974); and J. Peeck, "Retention of Pictorial and Verbal Content of a Text with Illustrations," Journal of Educational Psychology 66 (1974).

^{2*}Gunter, p.

^{2*}Stephen D. Reese, "Visual-Verbal Redundancy Effects on Television News Learning," Journal of Broadcasting 28 (Winter 1984): 79-87.

²¹Dan Drew and Thomas Grimes, "The Effect of Audio-Visual Redundancy on Audio and Video Recall in Television News," paper presented the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Memphis, Tennessee, August 3-6, 1985, p. 10.

²²Jinok Son, Stephen Reese, and William Davie, "Effects of Visual-Verbal Redundancy and Recaps on Television News Learning" Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media 31 (Spring 1987).

Such studies have broad implications when related to the role of television in the modern political process. Recent studies have concluded that in television news coverage of elections differing messages are presented visually, independent of verbal commentary. Frank, in an analysis of the 1972 U.S. elections, found visual messages were used to "portray the candidates in quite different terms. These differences occurred in the 'grammar' of the . . . newsfilm clips."²³ Kepplinger reviewed visual coverage of the 1976 chancellor's election in the Federal Republic of Germany and found that one candidate was seen more frequently in shots presenting visual information of disapproval (including symbols and banners) than was his opponent. Verbal reports, however, presented no significant difference in coverage.²⁴

Politicians have recognized the important of the visual in television, and turned to specialists paid for their ability to craft images for television. Subsequent research in television content relating to candidates and campaigns has focused on this advertising, the so-called "spots".²⁵ In a study of one aspect of the visual language in television spots, Messaris and Nielsen noted that the use of symbols in association with political

²³Robert S. Frank, "The 'Grammar of Film' in Television News" Journalism Quarterly 51 (Summer 1973):250.

²⁴Hans Mathias Kepplinger, "Visual Biases in Television Campaign Coverage" Communication Research 9 (July 1982): 445.

²⁵Richard A. Joslyn, "The Content of Political Spot Ads," Journalism Quarterly 57 (Spring 1980): 98.

candidates implies connection, and by editing the sequence of shots, television images can be juxtaposed to create a "visual simile" through "associational montage." The researchers note such associations "may bring about an unconscious association between product and image even for those viewers who were never consciously aware of the intended analogy."²⁶

Shyles examined the visual methods used in television political spots to create "image," which he noted could mean either the collection of appearances that form the perception of a personality, or the physical, visual presentation of a likeness. He defined visual likeness of a candidate as "method of presentation," and determined that "presenting candidates in formal dress, speaking directly to the camera and in interior locales was the major graphic format associated positively with [discussing] issues," whereas image-oriented messages were characterized by visual stills of candidates associated with famous persons, fast transitions between shots and candidates oriented indirectly to the camera."²⁷

Shyles adds that the coding schemes used to represent candidates are not yet understood. Alternative methods of

²⁶Paul Messaris and Karen Nielsen, "Viewers' Interpretation of Associational Montage: The Influence of 'Visual Literacy' and Educational Background," paper presented to the Visual Communication Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, D.C. August 10-13, 1989, p. 18.

²⁷Leonard Shyles, "The Relationships of Images, Issues and Presentational Methods in Televised Spot Advertisements for 1980's American Presidential Primaries" Journal of Broadcasting 28 (Fall 1984): 418-19.

research, he suggests, "ought to explain and model codes for the electorate so that voters can become wiser consumers of important formats of political communication."^{2*} Similar needs have been noted regarding television news coverage of the political process: "Future research about TV news should examine the communication potential of television news video, a virtually unexplored area," one author concludes.^{2*}

Hypotheses

Because an effort to manipulate meaning through television's visual content ultimately depends on the content of its basic elements, the individual shots, it is appropriate for research to begin at that point. This study reviewed television news coverage of the 1988 U.S. presidential election campaign, seeking to determine how much visual content of television news highlighted discussion of issues, a traditional role of journalism in election campaigns, versus the amount television news succumbed to the manipulations of campaign organizers and mimicked political advertising.

The study investigated the following hypotheses:

- 1) Because much recent research in the visual content of television indicates its "language" often involves the purposeful association of symbols, it follows that the candidates would attempt to present such associations so that they might be

^{2*}Ibid., p. 421.

^{2*} Conrad Smith, "Profile of Television Reporters and Photographers," Journalism Quarterly 66 (Spring, 1989):185.

conveyed by television news. Therefore, it is hypothesized that in national television news coverage of the presidential candidates, the candidates will be seen more frequently in association with some visual reference or icon applicable to a campaign theme or issue than they will be seen in some neutral situation, without such visual reference or icon.

2) Regardless of the varied messages possible in the visual and verbal tracks, research indicates all three major broadcast networks follow similar patterns in news coverage. Therefore, there will be no significant difference among the three national television networks in the number of such references broadcast during the national evening news programs.

Method

This study analyzed the visual content of all the national nightly news broadcasts of the three national television networks for the weekday nights (Monday through Friday) from the traditional opening day of the campaigns, Labor Day, to the evening before national presidential election day. In 1988 this was the period from September 5 to November 7.

To develop the data for analysis, the researcher assembled a complete collection of these news programs by arranging for off-air video taping using standard VHS equipment and through the loan of seven news segments from the television news archives at Vanderbilt University completed the collection.

To investigate the visual messages of the campaign, the unit of analysis for this study was established as the shot which

included the visual image of presidential candidates George Bush or Michael Dukakis. Every shot in which a candidate appeared (not including still illustrations used with graphics, or discussions of candidates' advertising spots) was examined--with the sound off--in order to find symbolic references to the campaign's issues, as created by visual association with the candidates. The issue categories were developed for this project from lists used by Moriarty and Garramone,²⁰ Joslyn, Schneider,²¹ Frank, Kepplinger and Shyles, and from assorted studies of marketing, media effects and values, and news content.²²

Identification of such references was tallied on a coding sheet. (See Appendix A.) In addition, coders were instructed to identify shots in which a candidate appeared with no reference associations. Separate totals were kept for the Republican and

²⁰Sandra E. Moriarty and Gina Garramone, "A Study of Newsmagazine Photographs of the 1984 Presidential Campaign" Journalism Quarterly 63 (Winter 1987).

²¹Frederick P. Schneider, "The Substance and Structure of Network Television News: An Analysis of Content Features, Format Features, and Formal Features" (Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1985).

²²For a categorization of human "terminal values" corresponding to general philosophical positions to which candidates might address themselves, see Sandra Ball-Rokeach, Milton Rokeach and Joel W. Grube, The Great American Values Test: Influencing Behavior and Belief Through Television (New York: The Free Press, 1984) especially p. 90. See Guido Stempel, "Topic and Story Choice of Five Network Newscasts," Journalism Quarterly 65 (Fall, 1988):751, for a broad list of commonly used news categories, adapted from Paul J. Duetschmann, News-Page Content of Twelve Metropolitan Dailies (Cincinnati: Scripps-Howard Research, 1959).

the Democratic candidates by using color-coded tally sheets, and separate tally sheets were created for each broadcast day.

A half-hour collection of August news segments from all three networks was used as a preliminary sample test to determine the level of agreement among members of the coding team. Using the Holsti method,²² the three members of the coding team exhibited a 94 percent level of agreement on the number of shots eligible for coding (that is, those including images of the candidates). In observing the visual contents of the pre-test shots, coders achieved an 88 percent level of agreement on the number of shots including no visual reference association, and a 94 percent agreement level on the total number of visual references fitting one of the 15 symbolic reference categories.

Preliminary testing results were discussed with coding team members, and then each coder was given one of three separate three-week compilations of news segments for review and coding. At the conclusion of the coders' final review, totals in these reference categories formed a record of the candidates' attempts to present visual messages during the formal campaign period.

²²As described in Roger D. Wimmer and Joseph R. Dominick, Mass Media Research (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company), p. 154, the formula is: Reliability = $2M/N_1 + N_2$, where M is the number of coding decisions on which two coders agree, and N_1 and N_2 refer to the total number of coding decisions by the two coders, respectively. Using this method, Lawrence Lichty and George A. Bailey, in "Reading the Wind: Reflections on Content Analysis of Broadcast News" in Television Network News: Issues in Content Research, ed. William Adams and Faye Schreiber (Washington, D.C.: George Washington University, 1978), p. 124, recommend an 80 percent agreement level.

Because the entire Labor Day-Election Day campaign was coded, results were true proportions of the campaign coverage, not numbers derived from a sample for which statistical significance tests are required in order to project or estimate reality.

With such data from the content analysis available, follow-up telephone interviews were sought with network news producers who covered the campaigns. Brian Healy of CBS and Beth O'Connell of NBC were asked their opinion of the news organization's coverage strategies, their opinion of the use of footage from pseudo-events, and their assessment of the role of television news in the 1988 election.

Results and Discussion

The data produced by the content analysis proved highly useful in evaluation of both hypotheses. The wealth of data provided by review of the entire campaign period resulted in observation by the coding team of a total of 2,582 television camera shots of the presidential candidates. Coders determined that of this number of shots, 1,196 (46.4 percent) included the image of a presidential candidate framed in a visually neutral situation, defined for this study as the candidate shown in the television frame with none of the reference symbols listed on the coding sheet.

The remaining 1,384 shots (53.6 percent) included one or more visual reference intended to show association with some issue or campaign theme. Those results supported the first hypothesis, as Table 1 indicates. Given the large number of

shots, the difference is well beyond mere chance occurrence: statistically, the news producers had 2,582 chances to choose either to include with the image of a candidate one or more visual reference associations, or not to include such visual reference; purely random selection determined by, for example, flipping a coin, would result in a fifty-fifty split. The Statistical Hypothesis Test for Two Proportions From One Group

Table 1
Proportion of shots
with and without visual reference associations

Shots with no reference associations	1,198 (46.4 percent)
Shots including one or more reference associations	1,384 (53.6 percent)
Total shots	2,582 (100 percent)
$Z = -3.67, p = .0001$	

indicates that the proportion of references to no-reference shots exhibited in the campaign's television news coverage would be expected to occur by chance about one time in a thousand. Clearly, the news producers were not flipping coins to choose whether to use shots with or without reference associations.

Actually, the televised message was even more weighted against neutral presentation of the candidates. If every visual reference association with a candidate is counted individually, their total of 1,900 far outnumbers the total number of times a

candidate appeared in television news with no reference association.

Hypothesis two sought a comparison among the three networks. In the context of this study, "difference in the number of references" was defined two ways.

First, the network content was analyzed to determine the tendency toward use of neutral appearances of candidates, versus shots of the candidates which included one or more visual reference association. As Table 2 indicates, the totals show

Table 2
Number of shots with and without
visual reference associations,
by network

Network	Shots w/out references	:	Shots with references	Total
		:		
ABC	430 (50.1%)	:	429 (49.9%)	859 (100%)
		:		
CBS	452 (42.8)	:	605 (57.2)	1,057 (100)
		:		
NBC	316 (47.4)	:	350 (52.6)	666 (100)
		:		
Totals	1,198 (46.4)	:	1,384 (53.6)	2,582 (100)

considerable differences among the three major networks in their visual presentation of the campaign period.

It is apparent that the networks, at least in their coverage

of the 1988 presidential campaign, differed considerably in both visual complexity and tendency toward use of shots including visual reference associations. CBS leads all networks both in number of shots broadcast and in the proportion of shots including visual reference associations. NBC follows in the proportion of shots including visual reference associations, but in total broadcast far fewer shots of the candidates than the other two networks. ABC takes the middle in both total shots, and in the proportion of shots including visual reference associations.

The hypothesis can be examined in further detail by including the element of political party. As the proportions presented in Table 3 indicate, the networks varied considerably in their visual presentation of the 1988 campaign. ABC again is shown to have presented coverage of nearly equal proportions between political parties, as well as between no-reference association shots and shots including visual reference associations. CBS and NBC, on the other hand, show considerable variation.

Specifically, the data indicate that while CBS exhibited a general tendency toward use of shots with visual reference associations, it broadcast 321 shots of Bush, or about 59 percent of all shots of the GOP candidate on the network, that included one or more visual reference associations. Alternatively, 284 shots of Dukakis, or about 56 percent of the Democrat's total, included visual references carrying that party's message.

The content of NBC shows an entirely different perspective. In totals, NBC broadcast nearly 400 fewer shots of the two candidates, and reversed the proportions. Whereas NBC included

Table 3
Shots of candidates
by party, use of references, and network

Network, Candidate	Shots w/out references	:	Shots with references	Total
ABC, Dukakis	211 (49.6%)	:	214 (50.4%)	425 (100)
ABC, Bush	219 (50.5)	:	215 (49.5)	434 (100)
CBS, Dukakis	227 (44.4)	:	284 (55.6)	511 (100)
CBS, Bush	225 (41.2)	:	321 (58.8)	546 (100)
NBC, Dukakis	159 (44.2)	:	201 (55.8)	360 (100)
NBC, Bush	157 (51.3)	:	149 (48.7)	306 (100)

references associated with George Bush in 49 percent of its total of 306 shots of that candidate, the network included visual reference associations in 57 percent of the 360 shots of Dukakis.

Overall, the data comparing the three networks' presentations of the candidates show considerable variation,

rather than the uniformity expected. Therefore, hypothesis number two is not supported.

Discussion

Results relating to hypothesis one of this project illustrate the extent to which television news has accepted the modern candidate's visual mode of presentation. In light of the highly choreographed qualities of the modern political campaign media event, it must be recognized that substantially more than half of the television camera shots involving visual images of the candidates broadcast during the evening news coverage of the 1988 U.S. presidential campaign includes symbols chosen, positioned or created by the campaign political operatives. Some shots, in fact, were replete with symbols agreeable to the candidates.

It must also be noted, however, that these observations clearly do not show some nefarious conspiracy between network and candidate. Just over 46 percent of the shots broadcast in the campaign were neutral scenes, which Shyles describes as the visual type most often associated with discussion of real issues. It is apparent the networks expended considerable effort to convey an enormous number of visuals that did not carry a message created by a candidate, because within the operating framework of television, a picture medium, the news producers inserted a considerable number of pictures that served as little more than illustrations for a verbal message. For example, both CBS and NBC carried lengthy interviews with the two candidates: Michael

Dukakis met with Dan Rather on Oct. 27, and NBC carried lengthy interviews with Bush on Oct. 31 and with Dukakis on Nov. 1.

Neutral shots of the candidates also were spread freely throughout the campaign coverage. The networks made frequent use of footage from the candidate debates, with blank, painstakingly equal blue backgrounds. In addition, all three networks frequently included analysis segments which typically featured graphs or statistics and still-image head shots of the candidates. (The latter were not counted in the coder tallies).

Nevertheless, the campaign totals show a clear disposition toward such symbol-laden reference associations. At a minimum level of observations, the majority of shots included visual reference associations; the preponderance becomes even more striking when the proportions include the 516 additional symbolic references which appeared in shots in multiple-reference situations. With these included in the totals, symbolic visual references outnumber neutral candidate appearances by about 61 percent to 39 percent.

Results of the evaluations testing hypothesis number two require considerably more complex analysis. The hypothesis involves interaction among two candidates, three networks and the use or non-use of visual reference associations within the shot structure of television. Results that emerged showed surprising differences among the networks in their coverage of the campaign.

The observations for this part of the study are most clear in relation to the shot (the continuous perspective of a single

camera) and its content. For the coders, this structure provided virtually no ambiguity, as would be expected. In addition, in the context of this study evaluation of each shot's content allows construction of simple dichotomies: the shot included either Bush or Dukakis, or it did not include a candidate, and either the shot included a visual reference association, or it did not. Comparisons across networks were therefore straightforward.

If it is understood that inclusion of visual reference associations disseminates information designed by, or favorable to, the candidate and his message, such comparisons showed ABC to be the neutral network, while CBS showed an inclination to broadcast shots favoring Bush and NBC showed a considerable inclination to present views favoring Dukakis.

The tabulations indicate that CBS showed a general preference for shots with visual reference associations, but parceled these to the two candidates in unequal proportions. The GOP visual message was included in nearly 59 percent of its total, a relatively greater amplification than the Democrats received in their shots with visual references, representing about 56 percent of their total on CBS.

NBC, on the other hand, presented Bush in nearly equal numbers of shots with no reference associations versus shots with references, giving a slight edge to non-reference shots of Bush. However, Dukakis was seen on NBC in 54 more shots than Bush, a variation greater in absolute numbers than either competitor

network, despite the far fewer shots broadcast by NBC during the campaign. In addition, nearly 56 percent of the shots of Dukakis included one or more visual reference associations.

Comparison of totals in this analysis also proves interesting. ABC is the middle network in shot activity, the total of CBS shots far outnumbers totals for the other networks, and at the other extreme, NBC broadcast the fewest shots of the candidates. The difference was both noteworthy and notable: coders mentioned the minimal quantity of coverage by NBC, and a review of program content by date indicates the network chose to provide no presidential campaign coverage on September 14 and October 4, no visual coverage of Bush on three dates, no pictures of Dukakis on four dates, and no pictures of either presidential candidate on one date. NBC, it appears, responded to numerous charges of inefficient campaign coverage by devoting relatively more time to its verbal coverage of the campaign.

Network representatives interviewed regarding the content analysis results provided interesting first-hand evaluations that confirmed these observations. CBS News Executive Producer Brian Healy, who beginning in March, 1988, supervised that organization's campaign coverage, said he believed the election campaigns fell into patterns of candidates attempting to promote themselves through visual opportunities, and that forced choices by television news, which he described: "Run it, don't run it, or

use it as an opportunity to talk about an issue."²⁵

"We never sat down to look only at the visuals. We attempted to look at the entire package," he added.

Healy cited examples to stress the network's attempt to provide fair coverage despite an onslaught of visual symbols. "You'll note all the networks were pretty negative about visuals. Look at the flag factory," he said, referring to a much-discussed Bush September 20 appearance replete with patriotic symbols. "You try to talk over something. You try to minimize it, try not to be sucked into it. We try to put the correspondent on camera, talking directly to the people.

"We tried to put the man in front of the camera, or go to the network news anchor," he said, adding that CBS also used campaign visuals as "B-roll" shots (scenes over which correspondents spoke), reducing the visuals to "wallpaper-- something to talk over."

Healy suggested the problem of covering such symbolic visuals is "a problem that comes out of television's strengths." Television, he said, must include pieces with both content and visual images. "We have to fight that instinct during the campaign," he said, but he added that CBS would not alter the reality of campaign scenes. "I told correspondents to make the pictures strong," he said, "but you don't have to put [a candidate] into a montage to make it look like a good crowd."

²⁵Interview with Brian Healy, CBS News, Washington, D.C., February 13, 1990.

Healy admitted that approach could provide advantage for a candidate, however. The candidates, he said, designed their own media backdrops, and the Reagan-Bush teams developed the technique of putting people behind the candidate speaking at a podium. Resulting television coverage would then present, for example, a background of uniformed police as a symbol of law and order. "You draw attention to it," Healy said. "If you have [Bush] talking, the cops are going to be there."

On the other hand, the Dukakis team tried to look presidential by placing their candidate in formal, neutral speaking situations, which Healy described as a sign of a stodgy conservatism. "For a time, they didn't give a damn about his visuals, and frankly, if they don't give a damn, I don't," Healy said.

The result in the campaign was a creative advantage CBS recognized, but couldn't avoid, he said. "You try to neutralize Bush by not having them [the Bush organization] neutralize the story. I can't key out the background behind Bush to make it equal to Dukakis.

"Regardless of how you try to put it in context, if somebody's more creative, it's their advantage," Healy noted. "But I'm not prepared to say the visuals determined the outcome of the election."

According to the content analysis data, an alternative in campaign coverage was presented by NBC. NBC Field Producer Beth O'Connell, who worked with correspondent Lisa Myers to cover both

the Bush and Dukakis campaigns, described a distinctly different coverage strategy which put less emphasis on high-profile correspondents covering events. "We didn't do the candidate's day: 'Here they come, there they go,'" she said. "We chose to do thematic pieces."²⁶

The NBC content, O'Connell said, reflected the field team's preference for interpretation, and its product was not questioned by the network headquarters. "I always think it's better to put things in context, rather than to just lay it out there," she said.

O'Connell said she believes a strategy to merely present the campaign scenes as they occurred would result in a weaker journalism. "My personal view is that you're doing what they want you to do, and then you're a news service like TASS," she commented, referring to the Soviet Union's national news organization.

O'Connell said she actively attempted to counter campaign visual manipulations: "I truly made an effort to avoid obvious visuals," she said. O'Connell explained that while campaign organizers routinely provided a limited choice of camera positions at campaign sites, she instructed operators of the two or more cameras used by NBC to provide neutral shots, such as views from below George Bush to avoid the associational references described by Healy.

²⁶Interview with Beth O'Connell, NBC News, Washington, D.C., March 14, 1990.

Conclusion

Because visual communication taps into the belief system of the receiver, it is perfectly suited for modern political communication. Politics relies on manipulation of symbols that match the emotional needs of voters, and the modern voter must confront an overwhelming assortment of information in order to make choices. By 1988, efficiency favored easily accessible symbolic presentation.

The strength of television news is its visual aspect, but in its coverage of the campaign it appears this strength was usurped by the campaigns, which successfully created images that were then faithfully transmitted. And while the networks may suggest their verbal content counteracts the visual, research indicates otherwise.

The research reported here also provides evidence that there is variation among networks. While these differences do not indicate overt bias, they do show how a visually-based news presentation style can be co-opted in favor of a candidate.

This research points toward the need for more refined analysis of the visual aspect of television. Research in this area must begin to explore new methodologies for examining the content and meaning conveyed in the television message for, given the trends in modern society, it is important now to see what we are saying and how we are saying it.

Reference Categories	Shots																			Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
No reference identification No apparent reference association. (Interview format, speech, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Family Candidate seen with family member or members, with other formal family groups, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
International political relationships Candidate seen with identifiable foreign political leaders, foreign landmarks, foreign nationals in native costume, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Education Candidate seen in association with schools, classrooms, in academic gown, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Patriotic symbols and history Candidate seen in association with icons of America or American history: the flag, statues, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Law and order Candidate shown with police, police hardware, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Agriculture and "the land" Candidate seen with farmland, farm machinery, farmers, ranchers, or other generic scenes of rural countryside, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Social or ethnic group identification Candidate seen with identifiable ethnic or social group, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Public health and welfare Candidate seen with doctors, social welfare recipients, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Military and defense Candidate seen with uniformed military personnel, veterans, defense hardware, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Conservation and the environment Candidate seen with wildlife, natural wilderness, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Domestic political relationships Candidate seen in association with identifiable U.S. political figures	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Religion Candidate seen in association with clergy or icons of religion or religious worship, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Organized labor or employment Candidate seen wearing hardhat, in factory or industrial setting, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Popular support Candidate seen with a large group expressing obvious interest or support	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Other Candidate seen with a reference not included in the above categories.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	